

POETRY for October 1940



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P O E T R Y

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DISCOVERY OF THIS TIME

Not by the Poets.

Nobody borrowed a couple of dogs and a gun and
Packed out: counting the evening crows:
Keeping the thrush to the left hand: hunting the
Birch: following wandering water: covering
Five nights in wet snow in the underbrush:
Bringing the evidence back in a bag—a plover—a
Large bird: killed on the nest:

and the neighborhood

Selling the farms: leaving the stock to the government:
Leaving the key in the lock and the cake on the table:
Letting the door slam: the tap drip

No one set out for it. Nobody looked for the way here

Not by Philosophers

No one sat down to a map of the
New land: measured the drift of the stars: of
Letters in bottles: figured the flight of the lap-wing:
Marked the compass courses on the chart—
“Here will be islands.”

“Here will be those shores.”
“The coast will show here where the dolphins are.”

Nobody figured it out on a fine morning
Propped on a wine-but^t by a windy sea
With a lit pipe and a lead stub and a board’s end....

(And they sailed and there was log wood on the sea.)

Not by the Conquerors either.

Nobody led us here.
Nobody lined us up in a town field:
Shipped us in barges: fought at the stormy head:
Marched on for three days in the desert:
Encountered the elephants: beat them: buried the dead in a
Closed ring:

And the next night to the west of us
Sea gulls over the sand: the wings numberless.

There are Leaders enough and they say what a mouth says but
None of them led us here!

No man beat the drum

Trekked to the site of it . . .

Marked the shore and the harbors . . .

We found it ourselves.

We looked and we had come here.

We looked from the same bench in the same park:—

The spaniel on the mat: the morning paper:

The Sundays every Sunday: the departure at

Nine-nine: the numbers on the tape

There were cabbages under the striped awnings. corn flowers:

Plums in sawdust: pears in baskets: grapes—

And we looked: and we had come here:

the locked doors:

The lime everywhere: everything new scrubbed

New scraped: the watchers at the corners:

The concussions at night: terror by dark: blood in the

Paved streets: whips: wounds: welts:

Torture with throttled tongue: limbs doubled:—

The beast at the back: the tooth at the throat: the telephone

Listening after the ring for the ear to listen:

The silence at the door behind the bell—

No one discovered it.

There was no voyage to this place. Fear has no history.

Archibald MacLeish

T W O P O E M S

THE KNOWERS

I saw the city, proud of its accomplishment,
Whose ears were clocks, no pulse attuned to time,
Attacked by hares and gophers and the deep-dyed mockingbirds
And all the animals long gone come back as ghosts of men
Animals I would not know: the forest flying-squirrel,
The murdered rose-breast pigeons and songbirds baked in pies,
Wolves, the mountain osprey, and the great snowy owl,
An eye alive in cream, whatever creeps or flies
Glide and pad into the city and their untamed feet or wings
. And glistening songs and stings swirl up in tints cyclonic
Like leaves blown high in beaks and colored plumage.
And the pawed beasts scurrying to gnaw our city's granite.

These were the spirits of men shot dead in Natchez,
Or winged on the Wilderness Road, and left to foxes,
The fresh-scalped child, the homestead man defeated,
The dancing whorehouse Lulus buried in white pine boxes
All that avarice ended, like the bunting's new eggs stolen
Or the padding fur shot through the eye with care
For London wraps, and all the life left murdered
Swarmed back into the city like those wild animals there.
Then where we danced the bruin twirled beside us
And all the holy animals of Iroquois or Sioux
Whirled down like masks alive, both beautiful and fearful,
To watch us and to frighten us in all that we might do.

And what they meant was such a bright confusion
To those who knew the various ways of knowing
That classify they could not. Some said they were not there.
Some said they were the shapes of wind in autumn garland
blowing.

But you know what they were. And now the only question
Is whether, being pleased so much with given and taken orders
Because that life is easier than asking who first said them,
To deny them with a word, or greet their great disorders.
For we cannot pipe them out of town, that's certain,
Any more than change at forty given colors in our eyes.
Nor are they stuffed, hawks hunting in harmless poses.
No. They are here to eat us, if they cannot make us wise.

DAYS OF DICTATION

Of flexed arising biceps multiplied
No brain alone is wired for the sense.
Common disaster parts its portentous thunder.
Each man preserves his separate innocence.
But what happens to a fellow's muscle
And to his fearing and creating will
When destiny's so deep he's swallowed in it,
And no one man seems much responsible?
Of masses in motion madmen possess the reason,
As, in the thudding springtime,
No light step comes, as said, to point the way,
But bulls of heavy and fanatic frame.

Reuel Denney

S I X P O E M S

ASK YOUR GROCER TOMORROW FOR THIS
GLAMOROUS PRODUCT

Up the successlip rail from zero,
his ruse rapid, moneybright boy
performing percentaged miracull
is streamlined alger: earlier hero
and leaner than Wall Street wonderbull:
floralapel, dapper as to glove,
casual handsnake, he glitters on his way
(smile-a-while), cliently to employ
the manner smooth as magazine love,
slicker even than heartbreak there;
then glows to his chromium lair to lay
those cunning adverteasements.

OCTOBER-MIDST

The mornings careless, sun-sprawled, radical with light,
roller-coaster air: plunging to bottomless bright
then giddying climb to shattering sky-sight
blue!

Trees carnival with color, the circus wind through all,
and I the acrobat along the slack wire crawl
the net of job below daily to fall
into.

THE ESCAPE

Suddenly in the subway
not having had time to purchase a paper at the newsstand,
and having read all the car-cards
(even the Alka-Seltzer verse ones),
I came face to face with my immortal soul,
and since it was three stations until my stop
I grew worried;
until I saw a boy passing through the various trains
distributing leaflets upon constipation and cure:
they were printed on both sides, with fine close print at the bottom,
so there was nothing to worry about really, nothing at all.

THE CIRCULATION OF NEWSPAPERS RISES GREATLY IN TIME OF WAR

Pure as the oyster's pure incest
eyeballed delicate as meat
shiny like mud fluent as blood
fresh as the poisoned fangs secrete

plunged as the vulture's brilliant rush
clear as the cougher's spittled strands
bright as the shroud new as the grave
take daily horror in our hands.

P O E T R Y : *A Magazine of Verse*

POEM FOR THE SEVENTH DAY

Propel no more. Leave off the oars,
and let the oarlocks coat
This is Someday, our Day of Rust;
we slip from the side of the boat
and do not steer or swim but lie
face downward dead man's float.

ULLABY

Good night: sweet dreams: the mortgage is asleep,
the due installment's eyelids flutter;
the gas meter is quiet, ticking sheep,
the collection agent's snorings flare and gutter;
the billing machines are drugged: they slumber deep,
the credit managers float dreaming on the town;
thus free and unencumbered lie we down.

Eve Merriam

POEM

He watched with all his organs of concern
How princes walk, what wives and children say;
Reopened old graves in his heart to learn
What laws the dead had died to disobey;

And came reluctantly to his conclusion:
"All the arm-chair philosophers are false,
To love another adds to the confusion,
The song of pity is the devil's waltz."

And bowed to fate and was successful, so
That soon he was the king of all the creatures:
Yet, shaking in an autumn nightmare, saw,

Approaching down an empty corridor,
A figure with his own distorted features
That wept, and grew enormous, and cried Woe.

W. H. Auden

BATH OF APHRODITE

She rises among boulders. Naked, alone,
In freshets of the seacliff wind she stands;
She comes rose-golden over the color of stones,
Down to the wide plane of the seaward sand.

And what are these . . . visitants that pass her?
Shorebirds with wings like thin
Fins against the morning

She wades in shallows warmer than the air
And sees the long push of the promised foam,
She feels the chill that draws her breath like fear,
And wading slowly feels for the deeper cold . . .

What voices twitter and fade along that shore?
The godwit and the killdeer and the curlew,
The turnstone and the willet.

And now the water is silvering to her knees
Over the sunmarks flurried about her feet
She sees a hundred harmless fishes flit
In the autumn of the glass-sharp morning sea.

What birds are those that ride the rising seas?
Slow shorelong pelicans
Fanned by the shoreward green.

Her thighs curved like the Venus's-shell submerge,
She wades into deep waves, her body drowns
Up to the lifted breasts and lifting arms;
Foam floats the tendrils of her tightening curls.

BREWSTER GHISELIN

What birds are these that fall with never a swerve?
Far waves where morning burns,
Terns shatter into glass.

Now the rich moment, as she leans and swims
Folded into a hissing slope of foam:
The sea receives the shape that once it gave:
Her gold and roses to its dazzle of waves,
The shadow of all her secrets to its shade.

Brewster Ghiselin

AFTER LOVE

Grieve, grieve. The door has closed,
Abolished sound, and made the hallway light
Despicable and faint. The world has whirled away
Spun with the string of your defeat, and now
Lies bruised on a shore of vast indifference.
Now you may weep; no one will hear you now.
Your grief may blur the walls and blind the pictures,
Press the ceiling down upon you, stop the weak light
From under the door. Yours is the powerless dream,
The body of love interred in the invisible field.
This now becomes your own voice rising,
Giving her name to the insane dark,
Saying her name as if she were there to hear it,
As if your hand touched her hair, her face.
Across your mind this blue plume falls and falls.

Leo B. Levy

HOUSE

WALLS

The logs have been sealed away and overlaid
Paper on paper. You long to peel the stuff,
The flowered, the plain, the dearbought dim brocade,
Down to the muslin, down to the old buff,
Down to whatever is left of a man dead,
A bit of wool maybe dyed with butternut
Caught in a mitered corner, a hair of him shed
Or sweet in the wood the name of a girl cut.
There's not a man or a ledger to tell his name
Or whether he hewed from lodgepole or spruce or fir,
But wherever his bones are on the range or the plain
Here in old years his bones and his brain were.
Every time a nail strikes into the chinking,
Into the hollow of time, it will set you thinking.

DOOR

Your house is old, he said, was counted old
That time I knocked here forty years ago
End of a winter bottomless with cold
And all the trailmarks useless under snow.
Widow with one bullcalf in residence,
And he afire to hightail over the pass.

Wasn't a prayer could hold him under fence.
He melted out at the foot of Boreas
Come spring, with daisies sprouting at his toes.
I was the one to tell his mother. I came
Here to this door and knocked. A woman knows,
He said, that kind of knock. She called his name . . .
He stopped, and out of silence crept your wonder
To stare upon a door so blank of thunder.

ROOF

The roof is written in that character
Devised for home by ancients of the East.
Nights when the pointed laughter of a star
Too swiftly wheeling down the dark has ceased,
Has drawn your vision reeling on to drown
Beyond the snowhorn turning overhead,
Inexorably turning on the town,
The roof will fold you quietly to bed.
Days when the winds that harry the Divide
Whirl down with snow upon their devil dances,
When atoms split in cosmic suicide,
The roof repellent to such necromancies
Resting upon its walls aloof, alone
Sunders from space this safety for your own.

WINDOW

Intolerable the marching of this range
This fugue of sight unbroken and immense
In theme and counterpoint forever strange
Forever overflowing human sense.
Impose upon your lips the native game
Of undertruth, the minimum of awe.
At sunset when the snowsmoke drifts in flame
Say it is pretty, presently withdraw
From stern crescendos rising overlong,
And though the drive and rhythm of that ramp
Runs endless eastward resonant and strong,
Pull down the curtain, sit beside the lamp
Until the world within your eyeballs' arc
Rocks to its poise against the rushing dark.

Belle Turnbull

SONG FOR THE COUNTESS OF PEMROKE

When I was walking
Down by that green gate
I had the butterfly in my guts
And the harp in my throat;
The wheel in my left hand
And in my right
The perpetual candle
That the wind can tremble
Or the least touch light.

When I was sleeping
The cold bird overhead
Came down to my bed
For comfort and I said:
O the gold-tufted, feather-crested,
Blue-eyed, passion-breasted,
Paradise bird has nested
So near my head.

When I was abject under
The gaudy summer tree
Out of the branches sprang a hand
With a sprig of misery and
All the blossoms of understanding
And gave them to me.
The foliage of the tree was golden and came down
Entirely over me
And covered me entirely with splendor
Like the laburnum tree.

George Barker

THE ANCHOR

Before I cast anchor in the treasure
Of my last love, I have need
To course the world, fevered as a racer—
In my pockets, youth
And a golden seed.

And to embrace a serpent of the Nile
Such as the chlamys of Cleopatra hid,
And to hearken to the quiet soliloquy
Of the Virgin Mary in the pyramid.

To disembark in my native land,
To make myself a child and childlike trace
On my old school slate, in crayon,
The profile of a Guadalupean face—

To kiss like the Hindoos or the Polynesians,
Like the striped wood beasts or shaggy bears,
And to cast anchor by a countrywoman of mine,
Wearing long earrings in her small ears.

And to say to Love—of all my sins
Even the blackest were passionate lovers.
Out of my cloisters a miserere rises up
And moves toward you with the steps of a baby,
Or as the white island of bubble hovers
On the surface of a coffee cup.
And, since my five fierce fingers of sense

RAMÓN LOPEZ VELARDE

Grasp the five great continents,
I can, O last love and ultimate goal,
Place my hand upon your Guadalupean soul.

Ramón Lopez Velarde
[Translated by H. R. Hays]

DRYDEN'S CECILIA

Περὶ δε μουσικῆς... καθάπτεο ὑπνου καὶ μέθης
—Aristotle's *Politics*, VIII 5

Did Cecilia play,
Foot shod in wool sandal,
When blue wings at gold pipes
Pumped at the handle?

Not for the nexus
Between mind and matter
Swell now the treble
And atoms scatter.

As the dove in eaves,
As geese in the brake,
Music has moved men
For its own sake,

With hooded sleep
By low-hung trees,
With wine cups full
As the seven seas.

Robert David O'Brien

T W O P O E M S

THE WOMEN OF MY BLOOD

If ours had been a family well-to-do,
With paintings of its women in the hall,
I should have outward likenesses of you
I could resort to and in need recall.

I much prefer it that I have you fainter
Lining a hall within, and do not see
Your care, your fear, your sureness, through a painter,
Copley or Gilbert Stuart though it be.

Sometimes almost I feel you, strong yet bending,
Concerned yet supple, in the deeds I do;
And this which now runs over from your tending,
This passion to belong, is it not you:

To be part of translucence; to keep clear,
To keep alight, the world that I hold dear?

TO A FRIEND WHO WON OUT

It was three months before you walked a step;
You never told us much about that time
Of pain and unappeasement, but of honor.
Then in another month you crossed your room,
And in two months could move about the house.

It was long since. Today no one would know
You once had crutches

So you learned (perhaps
The hardest thing of all, for you) to keep
Toward your own life the generous regard
You have for others' lives, coaxing yourself
To be contented with the daily failure.

You reached out for your crutches selflessly
As though to help another to his goal.
And did you not? I think you helped us all.

Haniel Long

POEM

Imagine the dread innocence
it takes to bomb a sleeping town,
Imagine how ignorant the hand
that tears a city down—
what a child heart is required,
what a seraphic unconcern
(across a border) flesh to burn—
what child-soul met, with wonder eye,
round legless beetle, wingless fly.

Tom Boggs

TWO POEMS

LOVE IS NO GHOST

Imagine the crying birds in this place,
Afraid of their brittle tracks across the snow,
And through the sultry clouds, the face
Of the hysterical voice, where tears plough
The field of dreams; the prouder race
Weep too, realizing the terrible Now.

Imagine, darling, the bulk of evil
Cast before you on the silvered screen;
Some, patient as the destroying weevil,
Decrying pity and exalting pain.
Do not seek the non-existent devil,
The scapegoat for what might have been.

Some there were who loved all men;
Swift whose exasperation drove him mad,
Marx with his ideals and Lenin
Who, a painted cocoon, now lies dead
In the vast hall, where no drop of rain
Can wake him, to recall the things he said.

Blake spoke the truth
But the easy shrug dismissed his word;
Hopkins lived strictly in his faith
And wrote what he believed but no one heard.
Darwin, himself afraid of death,
Tried to justify the noose and sword.

Dear, is all love lost?
Or can our evil world again mutate?
History, alas, is past;
Yet, although wounded deeply by our hate,
Love is no ghost,
But one long banished from the state.

Imagine, my dear, the thin voice
Calling the clouds to weep for empty Europe,
For the dead cities, the choice
Of the soft-nosed bullet or the poisoned cup.
Remember hate with glance as cold as ice
Watching love fade, and with love hope.

TOMORROW WILL COME SOON

Man, the unfortunate animal, watches the new moon crawl
Across the sky, across evil Europe; and tomorrow's dead
Are still aware of their pasts and are aware of all
The things that made their lives. To look ahead
At nothing is their whole ambition. Remember the mornings
Of your happiness; remember yesterday and the child
On the brink of ice, laughing at the solemn warnings;
Remember the first-loved's fingers and the way she smiled;
But do not look at the clock—the bland pale face of fate
Hung on the distempered wall, or hear the cracked bell
Marking the hours. Tomorrow will come soon, too late
For some of these, of whom there will be none to tell
How once Love made him King of the Antipodes
And her Queen of Cockayne, or Princess of the Seas.

Ruthven Todd

THE HUNGERED CIRCLE

Yesterday I sat alone in this room which is my made image
(Except it was not so harsh), the total life lived through me
Hung like a sunk body round my knees (except it was not so
torn).

Yesterday the room and I were more, were locked alone together—
And less, were locked together in a common melancholy skin.
God, I said, I do not know how to name it any more, I do not
know

How to say it any more, and lo! the dark was running with the
day

And I remembered it was morning and the last star had burned
away.

I was alone, Lord God of louts, I was alone!
And through my own tight teeth my ridicule seeped
Down on my own hands clutched over my own spaces.
God, I said, I can say pigeon, I can say plum,
And, because over the whole world all men have been defeated,
I can say love now but I do not know how to name it any more
Nor how to say it any more, and lo! the day alone began to run
And I remembered the men had come out of their wives into
the sun.

Yesterday we had no windows and were alone and on our door
The day pressed its woman hands and we did not know
How to drive it away or how to get it, for the key had turned
Lord, the key had turned, and we were alone.

God, I said, I do not know how to name it any more, I do not know
That it is enough, and it is better that we name it in advance.
And lo! the day was running under the black load
And I remembered it was night and the first star had already
crowed.

Harvey Breit

ATLANTIC CROSSING

Much have we heard of the false and insecure:
Sunblind blade in the black the grudging fields
At ploughing, zigzag to plummet the hodman builds
His wall, the blackbird on the vulnerable bough.

Unnatural the hands O the touch of lovers downdark,
The fallacy of memorable hills and moon, not fearing—
Galileo at a midnight lens staring
At critical stars: Europe at his back.

On this island-isolation what crag the plunging
Anchor of our fear to drag at? what ambush for the ear,
To intercept the eye what hurdle where, ranging
The whole the windswept glory of the sea? How,
O how this falsehood till final waters the changing
Bone return, gentle denial here?

Ralph Gustafson

F O U R P O E M S

UNIVERSITY

To hurt the Negro and avoid the Jew
Is the curriculum. In mid-September
The entering boys, identified by hats,
Wander in a maze of mannered brick
 Where boxwood and magnolia brood
 And columns with imperious stance
 Like rows of ante-bellum girls
 Eye them, outlanders.

In whitened cells, on lawns equipped for peace,
Under the arch, and lofty banister
Equals shake hands, unequals blankly pass;
The exemplary weather whispers, "Quiet, quiet"
 And visitors on tiptoe leave
 For the raw North, the unfinished West,
 As the young, detecting an advantage,
 Practice a face.

Where, on their separate hill, the colleges,
Like manor houses of an older law,
Gaze down embankments on a land in fee,
The Deans, dry spinsters over family plate,
 Ring out the English name like coin,
 Humor the snob and lure the lout.
Within the precincts of this world
 Poise is a club;

But on the neighboring range, misty and high,
The past is absolute: some luckless race
Dull with inbreeding and conformity
Wears out its heart, and comes barefoot and bad

For charity or jail. The scholar
Sanctions their obsolete disease;
The gentleman revolts with shame
At his ancestor

And the true nobleman, once a democrat,
Sleeps on his private mountain. He was one
Whose thought was shapely and whose dream was broad;
This school he held his art and epitaph.

But now it takes from him his name,
Falls open like a dishonest look,
And shows us, rotted and endowed,
Its senile pleasure.

MIDNIGHT SHOW

The year is done, the last act of the vaudeville,
The last top hat and patent leather tappity-tap
Enclosed in darkness. Pat. Blackout. Only the organ
Groans, groans, its thousand golden throats in love,
While blue lowlight suffuses mysteries of sleep
Through racks of heads, and smoothly parts the gauzy veil
That slips, the last pretense of sleep, into the wings.

With a raucous crash the music rises to its feet,
And pouring from the hidden eye like God the Light
The light white-molten cold fills out the vacant field
With shattered cities, striped ships, and maps with lines
That crawl; symbols of horror, symbols of obscenity:
A girl astride a giant cannon, holding a flag;
Removal of stone and stained glass saints from a known
cathedral.

And the Voice, the loving and faithful pointer, trots
beside
Reel after reel, taking death in its well-trained stride.
The Voice, the polite, the auctioneer, places his hints
Like easy bids. The lab assistant, the Voice, dips
Their pity like litmus papers into his rancid heart . . .
Dream to be surfeited, nerves clogged up with messages,
And, backed up at the ganglion, the news refused.

Dream to be out in snow where every corner Santa,
Heart of one generation's dreams, tinkles a bell.
We know him too. He is the Unemployed, but clowns
As the Giver, receiving pennies in a cast-iron pot.
Dream to be cold with Byrd at the world's bottom. Dream
To be warm in the Vatican, photographing a manuscript.
Dream to be there, a cell in Europe's poisoned blood.

Revulsion cannot rouse our heads for pride or protest.
The eye sees as the camera, a clean moronic gaze,
And to go is not impossible but merely careless

O wife, what shall we tell the children that we saw?
O son, what shall we tell our father? And O my friend,
What shall we tell our senses when the lights go up
And noiselessly the golden curtains crash together!

LOVE POEM

Attempted suicide was your tour de force
Against defeat, a promissory curse,
An act of nakedness, your first attempt,
The most vital, an earnest stroke of luck.

They screaming picked you off the kitchen floor,
Rushed at the gas range, at the windows, fumbled
The phone. It cut their throat and nostrils. It hurt,
The hoarse hard exhalation of the burners.

I was there when the doctor pocketed his watch
And stood up. I was one among the heads
Converged like cameras on your waking. For
Your giant eyes opened and you vomited.

Resentment died in convalescence; what
Had swelled you like a pregnancy lay dead;
And now gave existence to that same respect
Which to have mothered made you want to die.

I heard one say, "Her gift was to be seen,
And poor. With sometimes spastic hate could foil
Her sister's husband and her mother's ulcer.
Called for in sealed and guarded cars could flee

Like wit across theatrical frontiers.
She was born among the mirrors of the bars
In the eyes of scions of important Jews
Whose gaze like marbles searched her dress, and paid.

Interpret it: the callous of the index
Kissed by the boss's son. The unreal wage
Of the big comptometer. The hours between
Punchclock, alarmclock. To the simple wish to sleep."

And you, "Life seeks its level, looking out;
Is physical, overt, uneasy lover.
Witness who put a high price on the money,
And, game for every whore, never forgave us."

Believe me, your intransigent good nature
Evokes, like inward joy of gas, a view
Of peace, a politics of strength, a pride
The touch germane to ecstasy requires.

NECROPOLIS

Even in death they prosper; even in the death
Where lust lies senseless and pride fallow
The mouldering owners of rents and labor
Prosper and improve the high hill.

For theirs is the stone whose name is deepest cut;
Theirs the facsimile temple, theirs
The iron acanthus and the hackneyed Latin,
The boxwood rows and all the birds.

And even in death the poor are thickly herded
In intimate congestion under streets and alleys.
Look at the standard sculpture, the cheap
Synonymous slabs, the machined crosses.

Yes, even in death the cities are unplanned.
The heirs govern from the marble centers;
They will not remove. And the ludicrous angels,
Remains of the poor, will never fly
But only multiply in the green grass.

Karl J. Shapiro

ANOTHER YEAR

FOURTEEN years ago, on the occasion of POETRY's fourteenth anniversary, Harriet Monroe wrote:

"Nothing is so mysterious as tomorrow, nothing so sure to come as change. So, as POETRY enters its fifteenth year, may it beware of nothing except the admitted, the conceded, the unalterable!"

These words are good to remember at the outset of another year, this time our twenty-ninth, a year that is packed with uncertainty. Looking back over the one just ended, we know that it is not likely to be easy. During the past year, for the first time since 1932, POETRY has had to operate without help from the Carnegie Corporation. This means that we have had to make up the required fund of five thousand dollars from private contributions. For twelve months, it has taken most of the time of the regular staff, augmented by the loyal efforts of readers and poets, to raise this very small subsidy. Why?

The answer most frequently given comes down to this: that in war-time the arts, and all such impractical nonsense, must go by the board. But this is one of those "accepted" sayings which we cannot accept. On close inspection it will be found that the persons who say this are those who have no interest in the arts in time of peace, but who now have what they believe to be a respectable opportunity of declaring themselves.

Unfortunately, some of these art-haters are in positions of social and intellectual leadership. In using the present situation as an excuse to retrench upon the nominal measure of support given to creative and educational projects, these persons are betraying their responsibilities.

What do they mean by "art," that they imagine it can be dispensed with? "Art" is simply a name for certain activities which are characteristic of every society above the zoo level. If this country is not strong and clever enough to protect itself, and if necessary the other democracies, without permitting these essential human activities to lapse, then it will already have yielded to the regressive forces of the time. It will have yielded, even while preparing to oppose them with gunfire.

As the situation grows worse, our determination to continue POETRY grows stronger. We remember those lines of Yeats about an aged man being but "a tattered coat upon a stick" unless

Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing
For every tatter in its mortal dress

and realize that they apply to our whole civilization. It is a time to double and redouble, not to curtail, our support of literature and the arts. While this age runs its course, we shall have need of POETRY and a few other such things to help us survive its dull and repetitious catastrophes. Except for what POETRY represents there would be no reason to survive them.

George Dillon

ON MUSICALITY IN VERSE

As Illustrated by Some Lines of Coleridge

HAVING had occasion to linger over the work of Coleridge, I came upon this problem: There were many passages that seemed to have a marked consistency of texture; yet this effect was not got by some obvious identity of sound, as in alliteration. For instance, the sequence of words, "bathed by the mist," seemed to justify a bracketing together, as a kind of unified event, for

other than purely grammatical reasons. They seemed to have an underlying consistency that gave them an appeal as musicality. The following observations are offered to the Guild, for what they may be worth, as an explanation of such effects.

Let us ground our speculations upon thoroughly orthodox phonetics. If you place the lips in the position to make the sound *m*, from this same position you can make the sounds *b* and *p*. Hence, when looking for a basis of musicality in verse, we may treat *b* and *p* as close phonetic relatives of *m*. The three are all in the same family: they are "cognates."

Now, if we take into account this close phonetic relationship between *b* and *m* as phonetic cognates, we find that "b— b— the m—" is a *concealed* alliteration. "B— b— the b—" would be blunt, and even relatively tiresome. But in deflecting the third member from a *b* to an *m*, the poet retains the same phonetic theme, while giving us a variation upon this theme. And were "mist" to be replaced by some word beginning with a phonetically disrelated sound, such as *w*, *z*, or *k*, the particular kind of musical bracketing that the poet got here would be lost.

Another orthodox set of cognates is *n*, *d*, *t*, with *d* and *t* bearing the same relation to *n* as *b* and *p* bear to *m*. Thus the *d* in "bathed" and the *t* in "mist" are cognates. So we find that the first and last words of the bracketed sequence both end on members of the *n* family. Or you could make the relationship still more apparent by noting that *d* is but a voiced *t*, and *t* an unvoiced *d*.

The corresponding aspirate of *t* is *th* as in "tooth." The corresponding aspirate of *d* is *th* as in "this." Accordingly, the *th* of "bathed" and "the" may be considered as variations upon the sound *d*.

In sum: *n* moves into *d* and *t*; and *d* and *t* move respectively into voiced and unvoiced *th*. The whole design would be

$$\begin{matrix} n & \leftarrow & d-\text{th} \text{ (voiced, or hard)} \\ & & t-\text{th} \text{ (unvoiced, or soft)} \end{matrix}$$

Similarly, the *m* family could be designed as

$$\begin{matrix} m & \leftarrow & b-v \\ & & p-f \end{matrix}$$

If, now, with these designs in mind, we inspect the underlying consonantal structure of "bathed by the mist," we find that it is composed of two concealed alliterations: one, "b—*b*—*m*"; the other, "—*thd*—*th*—*t*".¹ And I would suggest that the quality of musicality is got here by this use of cognate sounds.

Perhaps, in the line, "Fainting beneath the burthen of their babes," there is an over-stressing of the *b*'s, though the wide range of shifting among the *n* cognates helps greatly to redeem this effect, as you get *n*, *t*, both voiced and unvoiced *th*, and the *n* nasalized: *ng*. Except for the one *r*, this line contains, as regards consonantal structure, solely cognates of *m* and *n*. (For though the distance from *m* to *f* is great, the distance from *b* to *f* is much closer, since *p* is *b* unvoiced, and *p* leads directly into *f*. Hence, the *f* in "fainting" is a tenuous variant of the *b* theme.)

The notion of concealed alliteration by cognates seems obvious enough to require no further treatment or illustrations. However, before dropping this aspect of the subject, we might list other phonetic cognates by which the effect could be got. *J* is

¹We could differentiate the second kind by some such word as "colliteration." Thus, the bracketing, "soft and silent spot," could be said to alliterate *s* and colliterate *t* (with *t* extended into *nt* in "silent" and into *nd* in "and").

cognate with *ch* (as voiced and unvoiced members of the same family). Hard *g* is cognate with *k*. And *z* is cognate with *s*, from which we could move to a corresponding aspirate pair, *zh* (as in "seizure") and *sh*.

We may next note an acrostic structure for getting consistency with variation. In "tyrannous and strong," for instance, the consonant structure of the third word is but the rearrangement of the consonant structure in the first: *t-r-n-s* is reordered as *s-t-r-n-g*. In the line previously quoted, "beneath the burthen" has a similar scrambling: *b-n-th*(unvoiced), *b-th*(voiced)-*n*. Perhaps the most beautiful example of the consonantal acrostic in Coleridge is the line from *Kubla Khan*: "A damsel with a dulcimer," where you match *d-m-s-l* with *d-l-s-m-plus r*.

This acrostic strategy for knitting words together musically is often got by less "pure" scrambling of the consonants. The effect is got by a sound structure that we might name by a borrowing from the terminology of rhetoric: chiasmus, i.e., "crossing." Chiasmus, as a form in rhetoric, is much more often found in Latin than in English, owing to the greater liberty of word order permissible to Latin. It designates an a-b-b-a arrangement, as were we to match adjective-noun with noun-adjective, for instance: "non-political bodies and the body politic." This reversal, however, is quite common in music (where the artist quite regularly varies the sequence of notes in his theme by repeating it upside down or backwards)—and the musicality of verse is our subject.

The most effective example of tonal chiasmus I have found happens to be a reversal of vowels rather than consonants: "Dupes of a deep delusion," which is "oo of an ee ee oo." In the consonantal usage, the chiasmus is usually to be discovered

by using the theory of cognates. Thus, in "beneath the ruined tower," the last two words are chiastic in their consonantal reversal, *r—nd t—r* (with *t* as a variant of *nd*). We may thus see why "The ship drove fast" seems so "right" in sound. The surrounding structural frame of "drove" (*d—v*) is reversed in "fast" (*f—t*), with the variation of a shift from the voiced *d* and *v* to the corresponding unvoiced *t* and *f*.

Since we are on the subject of musicality, could we not legitimately borrow another cue from music? I refer to the musical devices known as "augmentation" and "diminution." Thus, if a theme has been established in quarter-notes, the composer may treat it by augmentation in repeating it in half-notes. And diminution is the reverse of this process. In poetry, then, you could get the effect of augmentation by first giving two consonants in juxtaposition and then repeating them in the same order but separated by the length of a vowel. Thus in

She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven,
That slid into my soul

you find the *sl* progression in "sleep," "slid," and "soul," but it is varied in its third appearance by augmentation: *sl, sl, s—I.* (One should also note the many repetitions and variations of sound in "she sent the gentle sleep.")

As an instance of the contrary process, diminution, we have

But silently, by slow degrees

where the temporal space between the *s* and *l* in "silently" is collapsed in "slow": *s—I, sl.* (Also involved here are an alliterated *b* and colliterated *s*.)

To sum up: we have the repetition of a sound in cognate variation, acrostic scrambling, chiasmus, augmentation, and dim-

inuition.¹ If one now applies this whole set of co-ordinates, one may note the presence of one or several, in different combinations. To select a few examples at random, for trial analysis:

"In Xanadu did Kubla Khan" is found, by reason of the cognate relationship between *n* and *d*, to be much more closely knit, on the phonetic basis, than would otherwise be supposed. One might make this apparent by imagining himself pronouncing the line with a head cold, thus: "Id Xadadu did Kubla Khad." "Drunken triumph" would be a modified alliteration, with *dr* (voiced) varied as *tr* (unvoiced). "So fierce a foe to frenzy" contains, besides the obvious alliteration, a diminution of the distance between *f—r* in "fierce" and *fr* in "frenzy." "Beloved from pole to pole" contains a cognate augmentation (that is: voiced *b—l* becomes unvoiced *p—l*, and the temporal distance in pronouncing the *o* of "pole" is greater than that in pronouncing the *e* of "beloved").

"Terms for fratricide" contains chiasmus and diminution: *t—r*, *f—r*, *fr*, *tr*. "The sails at noon left off their tune" contains a modified repetition of *ft* (in "left" and "off their"), while "noon" and "tune" are not merely internal rhymes, but are constructed of cognates, *n* and *t*. In "dote with a mad idolatry," the *d—t* of "dote" becomes augmented by a two-syllable interval in "idolatry." "Midway on the mount" gives us "mount" as cognate variant of "mid." In "only that film, which fluttered," you get a diminution

¹A major factor that has kept a consideration of musical reversion, augmentation, and diminution out of our standard prosodies may be this: That the prosodies have been disposed to confine themselves within the grooves set by Greek-Roman models, and these three devices were not so methodically exploited in Greek and Roman music as in Western music from Bach to Schoenberg. But I do not know enough about early theories of music to be sure that this explanation is correct.

from *f—l* to *fl*. In "the minstrelsy that solitude loves best," we find chiasmus with augmentation, as per the *ls* of "minstrelsy" and the *s—l* of "solitude."

There is quite a complexity in "steamed up from Cairo's swamps of pestilence," where the *s—m* of "steamed" is repeated in "swamps," while the *ps* of "swamps" is in turn augmented in "pestilence." In "green light that lingers," the *g-r-n-l* of "green light" is acrostically reordered as *l-ng-r* in "lingers." In "the spirit and the power," you get the temporal distance between the *p* and *r* in "spirit" augmented in "power." "Luminous mist" gives us *m-n-s*, *m-s-t* (cognate of *n*). "Sleep, the wide blessing" contains "*sl—p* the wide *bl—s*," which is to say (recalling that *b* and *p* are cognates, 1,2,3 3,2,1.

Coleridge also occasionally used the *ablaut* form (the Hopkins "heaven-haven" kind of punning got by the changing of vowels within a constant consonantal frame) as per his "loud lewd Mirth." And very frequently he obtained modified consistency by repeating one consonant while varying its partner with a non-cognate variant. Thus: "glimmers with green light"; "fluent phrasemen"; "in green and sunny glade." "Blooms most profusely" carries this process farther afield, in that the initial alliteration is by cognates, the voiced and unvoiced mutes. An exceptionally complex line of this sort is "blue, glossy green, and velvet black," where you have *bl*, *gl*, *gr*, *v—l*, *v—t*, *bl*. Here the second and third are paired, with the first consonant of this pair alliterated and the second non-cognately varied—while the *l* of "glossy" appears as a correspondingly placed member in three of the other four pairs: *bl*, *v—l*, *v—t*, *bl*. The *bl* design is augmented, by cognate, in *v—l*. And the design of "glossy green"

is augmentatively matched by the design of "*velvet*," one member being an alliteration and the second a non-cognate variant. It may be cumbersome to state these manifold interrelationships analytically, but the spontaneous effect can be appreciated, and the interwovenness glimpsed, by anyone who reads the line aloud without concern with the pattern as here laboriously broken down for the purposes of anatomic criticism.

People to whom I have suggested the use of these co-ordinates (obviously they could be applied to other poets) usually ask me whether I think that Coleridge employed them consciously. I doubt whether it makes much difference. For example, one may sense the well-knittedness of a popular cliché like "team mate" without explicitly noting that its structural solidarity is due, in large measure at least, to the chiastic progression *t—m m—t*. There is an indeterminate realm between the conscious and the unconscious where one is "aware" in the sense that he recognizes a special kind of event to be going on, and yet is not "aware" in the sense that he could offer you an analytic description and classification of this event. The first kind of awareness we might call a consciousness of method, the second a consciousness of methodology. And I presume that we should not attribute the second kind to an artist unless explicit statements by the artist provide us with an authorization. Furthermore, even where such explicit statements are available, we need not describe the awareness as wholly of the methodological sort. Very often in writing, for instance, one is conscious of using a tactic that seems to him like a tactic he had used before (that is, he feels that both instances could be classifiable together on the basis of a method in common). Yet he may sense this kinship quite accurately

without necessarily finding for it a corresponding analytic or methodological formulation.

And even if he does arrive at an explicit formulation of his tactic, the fact remains that he developed the tactic and used it with awareness long before this explicit stage was reached (a stage, incidentally, that either may lead him into a more "efficient" exploitation of the method, so that his manner threatens to degenerate into a mannerism, or may start him on the way towards totally new methodical developments: from method, to methodology, to post-methodological method).

In Coleridge's case, we do have evidence that he was "aware" of his consonantal practices at least to this extent: he was "consonant-conscious." Thus, in *Table Talk*:

Brute animals have the vowel sounds; man only can utter consonants. It is natural, therefore, that the consonants should be marked first, as being the framework of the word; and no doubt a very simple living language might be written quite intelligibly to the natives without any vowel sounds marked at all. The words would be traditionally and conventionally recognized, as in shorthand; thus: *Gd crtd tb bvn nd th rh.*

In the case of a passage like "my bright and beauteous bride," I doubt whether any poet or reader is sufficiently innocent of methodological awareness to miss the *b-t, b-t, b-d* structure of tonality here. As for the chiastic arrangement, the closest I can come to finding some explicit recognition of its operation is in his sensitivity to reversal of direction in general, as with the turn from "The Sun came up upon the left" to "The Sun now rose upon the right" (the reversal of direction following the crime). "Asra," his cipher for Sarah Hutchinson, was built acrostically. In "flowers are lovely, love is flowerlike," the grammatical chiasmus is obviously pointed, while the attendant "fl l-vl, l-v fl-l" structure of "flowers lovely love flowerlike" is almost as

obtrusive to the ear as the grammatical reversal is to the thought. And we may glimpse methodical concern behind the title "To the Autumnal Moon," which is more of an event musically than "To the Autumn Moon" would have been, since the use of the adjective form gives us an augmentation, from *m*_n to *m*—_n. (In effect, he explicitly pronounces "moon" once, but implicitly or punningly pronounces it twice.)

In all of the examples and speculations I have offered, I have made no attempt to establish any correlation between musicality and content. The extra burdens I should take on, if I attempted to deal with this controversial realm, would be enormous. Lines like "Black hell laughs horrible—to hear the scoff," and "Where the old Hag, unconquerable, huge" seem to profit expressionistically by their reliance upon gutturals. But I have here been offering co-ordinates for the analysis of musicality pure and simple, without concern for the possible expressionistic relation between certain types of tonal gesturing and certain types of attitude.

Kenneth Burke

A MEXICAN SYMBOLIST

THE POETRY of Mexico in recent years (unlike the painting) is closely connected with international trends and, more specifically, with symbolism. This movement, since its birth in the nineties, has flowered sooner or later in every country of Europe and even today, in modified form, still affects the poetry of the United States.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Mexican poetry is influenced by both Spanish and French symbolism. Ramón López Velarde

(1888-1921), acknowledged as the greatest Mexican modern, inclines more to the French tradition. The bitter ironies of La-forgue, the half-sceptical Catholicism of Corbière, the hallucinated imagery of Rimbaud are a part of his background and it is not too much to say that in maturity of style his work is on a level with that of his French masters.

It is also said that Velarde is the most Mexican of the Mexican poets. This indigenous quality is harder to analyze. Back of all Mexican art lies Mexican history—a story of a mixed race, Indian and Spanish, a story of a small bourgeois class with a thin colonial culture, a story of exploitation and poverty. Velarde lived in a medium-sized provincial city in which there was very little literary or artistic life. It was a town of little adobe houses—hot, dirty—with a population mostly poor and almost primitive in their *mores*. His richly imaginative spirit, imprisoned in the bitterness, the barrenness of provincial monotony, took refuge in irony and in the adventures of the mind. The grandeur and sweep of the Mexican mountains, the patient dignity of the Indian is not reflected in Velarde's work. He is the true poet of the Mexican petty bourgeoisie, a sordid nostalgic class existing as if in exile on the fringes of a country too great for them, a victim of forces beyond their comprehension.

Yet Velarde, a truly great poet, creates beauty out of this poverty of soul. In *The Anchor*¹ he has, like Rimbaud, fled in dreams from his imprisoning environment. Desperately he tries to explain his frustration to the "countrywoman" who will never understand him and in whom he will try to forget the unfulfillment of his life.

¹See page 16

Or he turns to the church and bathes the shabby little painted figure in the shrine with the riches of his imagination, as in *Dream of Innocence*:

I dreamed I took communion, spectral vapors
Surrounded my village, and Our Lady
Beheld how I wept and flooded her sanctuary.

And I wept so freely that my tears rolled afar
And rutted the streets as in a summer tempest.
And the children launched their boats of paper
And my countrywomen, with their skirts to their knees,
(As they say in the provinces)
Crossed through my tears with heartless leaps
And I stood before the Virgin, pensive and benevolent—
The lake of tears and the river of adoration.

Scarcely have I awakened from this marvel
That united extreme unction with my baptism,
One day I sought happiness in truth
And the next I looked for butterflies of blood;
Yet, clothed in the mantle of dust.
Of that blessed experience, I know that my heart,
Puffed up with celestial and rosy utopias,
Keeps its innocence still, its wellspring of light—
The lake of tears and the river of adoration.

Velarde is the author of several books of poetry, remarkable for their variety and richness. He is a difficult poet to translate because he employs a sonorous and musical technique often with intricate rhyme schemes.

While Mexican painting has received high praise in the United States, the literature of Mexico is almost unknown. Velarde is an example of what has been overlooked. He and other Mexican writers are worthy of a wider audience, especially among the reading public of the United States, a country which plays such an important rôle in determining the destinies of Mexico.

H. R. Hays

R E V I E W S

TWO KINDS OF FEELING

Song in the Meadow, by Elizabeth Madox Roberts. Viking.

MISS ROBERTS' most characteristic invention is a poem of the following kind (e.g. *Love in the Harvest*): a combination of an impulsive feeling, somewhat indeterminate in its object—longing, the sense of being haunted—with an objective and even minute picture of agricultural activity. The feeling is given especially in the lilting rhythm, either moderately lilting, as with anapests among iambs, or strongly lilting, breaking down ordinary double-meters into amphimacers and amphibrachs, to the point of song, as

áll thě mén|át wórk nðw||and|áll thě téams|ă-jínglë.

Often (e.g. *A Girl in the Twilight*), the feeling and the description are merely combined, without intermediate causal or symbolic relation: then the concreteness and busyness of the scene and the random observation of it directly express the happy impulse. There is little dramatic probability or intellectual reflection; in fact the powerful lilt precludes reflection. Sometimes the concrete description is regarded as a natural symbol, as in *Love's Fullness*: "beauty and plenty."

The poet has an explicit theory for this random concreteness:

I give you . . . any day, for entering
man's time on earth . . . for cutting aslant his track.

And especially the frequent formula:

Start anywhere,
build on the eyes or the feet or the hair.
. . . Start anywhere, anyplace.
Ben, Bob, Jim, Jack, Kate, and Shoat.

Thus is to be caught

The great body of the true,
the actual.

This "actual," objective, unreflective, environmental symbol is one kind of love,—for Miss Roberts is for the most part a poet of love. It is "happy" love, the development of the emotion present in her poems of childhood.

This then is the "song in the meadow and the song in the mouth."

Against this, however, there is a darker invention. This is a poem (e.g. *The Lovers*, *Love Went Riding*, *The Ancient Gulf*) with an emotion of loss and sadness, even a wish for suicide, combined with the following system of images: water, stones, fossil shells, cold season, gaunt trees, fog, drift, the sea, ships, the old. Here the relation of feeling and description is much more intimately symbolical, as for instance the water is where she would drown, or the sea is the reality she will never experience.

I asked her would I ride in a ship,
and would I ever go to sea,
she shook her head and told me, no,
that ships were not for me.

These poems are in tone much more thoughtful, although (or perhaps therefore) without explicit theory. The diction is symbolic, even abstract (cf. *Love Begun*), rather than minutely real; and the rhythm is earnest and seems to follow the reflection:

Cold lips of stone, and the spent sun
of the dark of the year.
Old seas locked into rock . . .

Is this to be taken as a feeling of maturity and disillusionment? I think not. It is rather the desire *earlier* than the children's poems—the archaic love—perhaps the "true love." Fossil relics

and forgotten songs. But these require mature reflection to hold before the mind. I think that these can be shown to be the best poems, though not the most characteristic. The conflict between the two kinds of feeling is expressed in *The Lovers*:

I said, I will lie
beneath this tree . . .
But I loved life
and life loved me.

In still other poems, as *The Lean Year*, *Corbin the Cobbler*, *Man Intolerant*, etc., and the long poems *A Man* and *Conversations Beside a Stream*, the thought and feeling are impersonal and political—they belong to the secondary environment. Yet they are developed from the first kind described above, with the addition of general ideas, the disillusionment of the depression, and a kind of liberal agrarian traditionalism combining Daniel Boone, Stephen Foster, peace, and democracy. It seems to me that these poems are less integral than the others. The overall rhythm that unifies even the most random of the descriptions is lacking, and there is no intimate mutual probability of the thought, structure, diction, and feeling, but even false emphasis and banality. Indeed, even in such poems as *Love's Fullness* or *Moonlight in Summer*, discussed above, the religious reflections introduced at the end are without genuine probability from the preceding incidents and feeling. Besides all these, there are a number of folk-epic sketches that seem to me flat; one beautiful little prayer, *Evening Hymn*; and two long running-on-and-on poems, one about a colloquy of pots and one about Jack the Giant-Killer.

At her best, Miss Roberts is deep in the 40 years of the American Renaissance, drawing on both its inspiration of expressing feeling by pictures and feeling and thought by actuality.

Paul Goodman

BACK TO THE PERSONAL

The Still Centre, by Stephen Spender. London: Faber & Faber.

Since the publication of *Poems* in 1934, Spender has been occupied with nearly every form of literary activity except that at which he excels, the short lyrical and satirical poem. His long political satire, *Vienna*, and his attempt at poetic drama were quite unsuccessful. His short stories and prose criticisms of literature and society are, at the most, only mildly successful. Thus it is reassuring, after a lapse of more than five years, to see another volume of his short poems.

These new poems are, from a technical point of view, the finest Spender has yet written, but many readers will be disappointed in the obvious inability of the poet to come to any sort of terms with his world. In short, he is still engaged in the same search for positive values that has sent him on so many fruitless literary ventures in the past seven years. There is no evidence in *The Still Centre* that he is approaching the end of this quest.

In a brief introduction Spender states that he has arranged the poems in four sections, "printed in the order of development, rather than in the exact order in which they were written." The first section contains the earliest poems, most of which, as the author says, are entirely rewritten and appear in quite different forms from those of their original periodical publication. The two versions of the last stanza of *An Elementary School Classroom* will indicate the amount of technical revision Spender engages in.

Original version:

Unless, dowager, governor, these pictures, in a room
Columned above childishness, like our day's future drift
Of smoke concealing war, are voices shouting

O that beauty has words and works which break
Through colored walls and towers. The children stand
As in a climbing mountain train. This lesson illustrates
The world green in their many valleys beneath:
The total summer heavy with their flowers.

Present version:

Unless, governor, teacher, inspector, visitor,
This map becomes their window and these windows
That open on their lives like crouching tombs
Break, O break open, till they break the town
And show the children to the fields and all their world
Azure on their sands, to let their tongues
Run naked into books, the white and green leaves open
The history theirs whose language is the sun.

The second and third sections of the book deal specifically with political subjects, the third being devoted entirely to the Spanish War poems. The last section contains the most highly personal and lyrical poems, which are perhaps the best things Spender has written. The introduction contains a justification for this group of poems which is worth quoting here for the light it throws on the poet's development:

I think that there is a certain pressure of external events on poets today, making them tend to write about what is outside their own limited experience. The violence of the times we are living in, the necessity of sweeping and general and immediate action, tend to dwarf the experience of the individual, and to make his immediate environment and occupations perhaps something that he is even ashamed of. For this reason, in my most recent poems, I have deliberately turned back to a kind of writing which is more personal, and I have included within my subjects weakness and fantasy and illusion.

There is no despair or retreat in this statement or in the poems to which it applies. On the contrary, it can be interpreted as a reassertion of hope in a crumbling world. The note is one of impending action, not escape. It is in this latest group of poems

that we can see more clearly than anywhere else in his work the essential difference between Spender and the poets who are traditionally grouped with him. Where an almost wholly satirical poet like Auden tends to follow the tradition of Donne and Marvell, Spender has closer affiliations with Shelley and Byron. He does not have the detachment of the true satirist; he treats the political subject, not epigrammatically as Auden does, but with the personal and lyrical touch of Shelley's revolutionary poetry. It is this traditionalism that has brought accusations of sentimentality and lack of subtlety from modern critics, who have perhaps precluded the possibility of lyrical treatment for modern political subjects. In a passage like the following from *To a Spanish Poet*, the imagery as well as the sentiment goes back to the Romantic tradition:

Oh let the violent time
Cut eyes into my limbs
As the sky is pierced with stars that look upon
The map of pain,
For only when the terrible river
Of grief and indignation
Has poured through all my brain
Can I make from lamentation
A world of happiness,
And another constellation,
With your voice that still rejoices
In the centre of its night,
As, buried in this night,
The stars burn with their brilliant light.

Nothing except the loose structure of the verse could mark this as twentieth century poetry. There is a minimum of the "unintelligibility" which, in modern poetry, has sometimes alienated readers and distressed critics.

The two poems from which I have quoted are typical of the greater number in the volume, but there are several short pieces

dealing with specific war incidents which are reminiscent of Whitman's *Drum Taps* and Wilfred Owen's war poetry. The somewhat mysterious title of the volume does not serve as a title for any one poem, but it occurs often enough for the reader to deduce that "the still centre" is a symbol for that position from which the poet can stabilize his values and thus come to terms with his world. It is the nebulous goal toward which Spender is consciously striving.

Any determination of the exact place of this collection in Spender's development will have to wait, but it is perhaps not too much to say that these forty short poems represent the best work of one of the most competent and sincere of living poets.

Robert D. Harper

TOWARD A METAPHYSICAL RENASCENCE?

The Spiritual Aspects of the New Poetry, by Amos N. Wilder.
Harper & Brothers.

Poetry between the two wars passed through an epoch of cynical nihilism and abject materialism, and the preoccupation with the purely demonic resulted in a "satanism" that precluded all possibilities for creative ascension. The language of poetry became journalistic. It was filled with the aura of cheapness and superficiality which usually mark transitional eras. The incantatory or simply liturgical quality went out of poetry altogether, and could be found, in fragmentary passages, only in occasional poems by T. S. Eliot whose religious evolution has definitely stamped his creative effort since *The Waste Land*.

A bewildered disquiet has marked all the poetry written during the past two decades in England and America. Mr. Amos

N. Wilder studies this phenomenon at length in a well-documented book in which he applies the creative Christian principle as an ethical gauge. He examines the experimental and revolutionary phases of modern poetry in relation to the disarray of "a world without roots." In analyzing the work of such poets as Conrad Aiken, Hart Crane, W. H. Auden, Robinson Jeffers, Robert Frost, Archibald MacLeish, D. H. Lawrence, W. B. Yeats, T. S. Eliot, and others, he tries to bring to emergence the confusion of the modern writers before the metaphysical anguish and the dissolution of modern society. The solution of each of these writers is explained—Jeffers' "deliverance from our human state"; D. H. Lawrence's animal primitivism; T. S. Eliot's Christian Protestant direction; Kenneth Patchen's social romanticism. Numerous apposite examples emphasize the inner struggle mirrored in their work. He interprets the general tendency towards an attitude of negation which differs vitally from the attitude of traditionalist poets. We follow his interesting analysis of Aiken's psychological researches in the latter's dissection of identity and individuation. He finds that Aiken is morbidly attracted by the disintegrated consciousness of modern man.

The malady of the soul from which Mr. Wilder believes these poets to be suffering is a real pathological fact today. Agnosticism, the law of causality, scientism, dialectical materialism, pessimistic nihilism, philosophic vitalism—all these forces have militated against a religious revival. "This main malady or sense of alienation and lostness of contemporary man," he says, "expresses itself for one thing as a vertigo, or what we have called a sense of the abyss." Meditating death is part of this mood. The general dissociation of urban man makes Mr. Wilder feel that

"we are playthings of some blind vortex." He quotes the exiled Russian philosopher Berdyaev to the effect that man has lost the human image or identity as a result of the havoc wrought by humanism since the Renaissance. Surrealist irrationalism leads us to perdition, asserts Mr. Wilder. Like most observers he makes romanticism responsible for these facts, without being aware that the romantic movement, historically speaking, had two currents to which Goerres once gave the name of "descending and ascending mysticism."

Mr. Wilder believes that he has found a new pantheism, a new ethos, a new Christian orientation in many of the poets whose work he examined. T. S. Eliot undoubtedly has a metaphysical tendency. But I, for one, fail to discover this trend in any of the other poets. For they write as humanists, as vitalists, as social revolutionaries. To measure the gulf dividing them from such writers, for instance, as Gerard M. Hopkins or Patrice de la Tour du Pin or Rainer Maria Rilke, we need only analyze the contents of the work of modern poets. There is no search for a new dimension in their verses. We see no super-rational expansion of consciousness. The "night" they evoke has no relation to that of St. John of the Cross and his mystic operations, but to the mechanistic night of the senses, of vitalism, of determinism. The emphasis is on the external and transitory phenomena. The emphasis is on primal chaos and despair.

Mr. Wilder fails to recognize that the malady of the human personality is followed by the malady of language. We notice in these poets the corruption of language. A spiritual poetry can only grow in an atmosphere favorable to the development of liturgical symbolism and liturgical language. A mere continuation of the Calvinist, Anglo-Saxon tradition is therefore

not enough. The "diversity of racial strains in American life" ought to make possible a vast synthesis of all mystic tendencies, with an emphasis on the sacred logos in poetry.

Mr. Wilder's book comes at the right time. It is challenging and stimulating. It is a straw in the wind. It is a prospection in that *verticality* of thinking which the apocalypse of our times seems to be resuscitating.

Eugene Jolas

POETRY ON RECORDS

"The sound of poetry is part of its meaning": Gordon Bottomley has rephrased an old truth in his introduction to the second *Voice of Poetry* record album. This recently issued volume, prepared under the direction of the Oxford Festival of Spoken Poetry and presenting John Gielgud superbly reading a miscellany of English poets, is another stimulating contribution to a movement of gathering importance—the greatest resurgence of interest in spoken verse since the passing of the bards and troubadours and the muting effect of the extension of printing.

The value of the phonograph in this revival has perhaps been more usefully recognized in England than in America. It is in England that the commercial gramophone companies have taken the lead in publishing poetry records; over here the impetus has mostly been provided by universities and educational associations, which make and distribute their own records of this kind. Collections of these at such schools as Harvard (the Poetry Room, Widener Library) and the University of Chicago (the Harriet Monroe Library) have aroused a good deal of student interest. For recorded verse usually affords students the best chance of

getting at the vocal problems of poetry: to hear a poet read his own work in person or to hear a trained actor read it may be a stirring experience, but it is a rare and evanescent one to most people and does not include the possibilities of repetition whenever wanted, a possibility the playing of records offers.

About once a quarter POETRY will review verse recordings. These will generally be of a non-dramatic nature,¹ and in keeping with the spirit of the magazine the emphasis will be on the contemporary. The first two articles will discuss the recordings which have been in the field for some time. After that it will be easy to get and keep up to date, as the output of this type of disc is not large.

First, some notations of classical and traditional poetry, whose value will be appreciated by the wide poetry audience as well as by teachers and by the poets themselves, partly for what such records can explain about the development of verse technique. There is not space for a full discussion of these; they can merely be mentioned in a general way. The most notable among this category of records are the classical Greek ones made by the British scholar W. H. D. Rouse, authority on the accents of ancient languages. His two records (Linguaphone Institute, N. Y.; one 10", one 12") give alphabet and diphthong sounds, etc., and then selections from Pindar, Homer, Sophocles and others in the "restored" pronunciation. A similar but larger effort is represented by the *Latin Readings* album of Professor E. K. Rand of Harvard in the Auditory Aids series (Harvard Film Society, Cambridge, Mass.). The ten records (12") in the Latin album

¹Those interested in the many old and new Shakespeare records available will find them examined in detail in my article "Shakespeare on Records" in *Theatre Arts* for June 1940.

include several important passages from each of the great Roman poets; one of the selections from Catullus demonstrates the difficult "Galliambic" meter which has tempted poets as recent as Tennyson and Meredith. There is also a separate Latin record (12") by Dr. Rand, with some Caesar on one side and the opening of the *Aeneid* on the other. Professor F. N. Robinson of Harvard has recited Middle English poetry on a record (12") in the same series, with sections from Chaucer's *Pardoners Tale*. Another Chaucer record (10") has been made by Professor Harry Morgan Ayres of Columbia University (for the National Council of Teachers of English, Chicago). A lecture on one side tells how to read Chaucer, and on the other side Professor Ayres reads the beginning of the Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*—you learn how to pronounce *Aprille* from this one, in the true Manly fashion. Professor Ayres has also recently made a *Beowulf* record.

Turning now to three contemporary poets:

John Drinkwater (Columbia, N. Y. and London; two 12"). The late Georgian writer made two records which reveal him as one of the most successful readers among verse-makers. This is not the place for an evaluation of Drinkwater's poems; the majority of those he selected for these records are among his most quaint and traditionally English, such as *Anthony Crumble*, *Mrs. Willow*, *Vagabond*, *Mamble*, and *Cotswold Love*. A former actor of the Birmingham Repertory, Drinkwater had a rich voice, and though he sometimes flourished the trilled *r* a bit too much for the listener's comfort, he had a warm, lively way of reading, and on the vocal side his records rank high.

Robert P. Tristam Coffin (National Council of Teachers of English, Chicago; one 10"). The most ambitious poem on this record is *The Secret Heart*, which has a sentimental introduc-

tion that is, nevertheless, better in some respects than the poem itself as a statement of experience. Coffin also reads *The Fog* and *Lantern in the Snow*, which makes a better impression. The down-East accent (dak for dark, hat for heart) is interesting to non-Yankees, and intensifies the New England effect of the atmosphere and imagery. Coffin's elaborate vocal signature at the end is a bit jarring. He has no marked skill as a reader.

T. S. Eliot (Harvard Film Society; 12"). This reading of *Gerontion* and *The Hollow Men* is perhaps the best known of all poetry recordings. The record itself is in point of manufacture one of the poorest in the Harvard series, but from the aspect of Eliot's performance it is one of the most thrilling of its kind. Eliot may not be equipped to read much poetry outside the range of his own, but the quiet intensity with which he reads his own is compelling and effective. Listening to this record should be, for those who find Eliot difficult, a lesson in what he meant when he once said that a poem did not need to have meaning in the obvious sense, that if it had vision and music it would also have a meaning which would suggest itself to the mind. Eliot's nerve-wearied, neutral voice (not strictly identifiable with Missouri, Harvard or London) is exactly the right one for projecting the substance of these poems. It is not often that intention and physical expression are so finely integrated.

The recordings discussed in the next review of this series will include those by Frost, de la Mare, Cummings, Vachel Lindsay, Christopher Hassall, Edith Sitwell and others who have contributed to the store of "trivial fond records."

Harry Thornton Moore

NEWS NOTES

THIS year the enforced vogue for cisatlantic vacations, together with a major political convention, brought us more than the usual number of summer visitors. Among them were Eunice Tietjens, on her way from the Caribbean to Lake Superior; Richard Eberhart, telling us about his experiences in military training camp and his promotion to the rank of sergeant; Millen Brand, who came to attend the Mobilization for Peace conference, Katherine Garrison Chapin, here for the Democratic convention with her husband Francis Biddle, the U. S. Solicitor General; J. V. Healy, who dropped in to consult about his forthcoming article on Pound; Reuel Denney and his intrepid dancer wife, on a camping trip from Buffalo to California, Maxwell Bodenheim, *semper fidelis*; May Lewis and her husband Lafayette Goldstone, the architect, going back to New York from the University of Colorado writers' conference; Kenneth Porter, taking the long hop between Vassar, where he teaches, and his native Kansas; Eve Merriam and her husband, from New York; Weldon Kees, the young Denver poet, on an Eastern holiday from his work as librarian; Henry Rago and John Malcolm Brinnin, Tom and Rosemary Boggs, returning to their new house in the Ozarks. And this list includes only poet contributors—not any of our other friends, the itinerant readers and subscribers, whose visits were equally stimulating.

We hear from New Directions that John Crowe Ransom is preparing a book on modern literary theory, *The New Criticism*, an analysis of contemporary tendencies in criticism, with special reference to T. S. Eliot, "the historical critic," I. A. Richards, "the psychological critic," and Yvor Winters, "the logical critic." It is Ransom's thesis that all modern criticism can be reduced to one of these three main types or to combinations of them.

One of our correspondents who attended the Bread Loaf School of English this summer tells us that there was a course in American poetry under Alfred Kreymborg but that "it looked for a while as if it were becoming a school of criticism, with John Crowe Ransom on the faculty and a lecture given by Allen Tate. After Mr. Tate took John Keats apart, one could feel opposition in the air on the mountain."

This month's new arrival among verse magazines is *Southern Accent*, published in Jackson, Miss., and edited by E. S. Campbell. POETRY gets a polite bow in the Introduction, which calls us "America's leading poetry journal, to now." The aim of the new magazine is to "promote the interest of poetry in the New World" and to provide for its poets "Recognition with Remuneration." It will pay \$2 for each accepted poem, and give monthly and annual prizes ranging from \$2.50 to \$100, but only subscribers (\$5 a year) are eligible for either payments or prizes.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

ARCHIBALD MACLEISH first appeared here, with his famous *Ars Poetica*, in 1926. He is the author of many books of poetry, including *The Hamlet of A. MacLeish*, *New Found Land*, *Conquistador*, *Public Speech*, *America Was Promises*, and the verse plays for radio, *The Fall of the City* and *Air Raid*. In 1939 he was appointed Librarian of Congress.

KARL J. SHAPIRO, who appears for the first time, is a young Baltimore poet. He attended Baltimore City College and the University of Virginia, and is now attending Library School. He is the author of *Poems*, published by the Waverly Press in 1935.

W. H. AUDEN, now living in New York City, is one of the best-known contemporary British poets. His latest book is *Another Time*.

HANIEL LONG has been a contributor since 1918. He is the author of several books of verse and prose, the latest of which is *Walt Whitman and the Springs of Courage*. In recent years he has been living in Santa Fe.

BELLE TURNBULL, now resident in Summit County, Colo., is a native of New York state but has lived most of her life in the West. In 1938 she was awarded the Harriet Monroe Memorial Prize by POETRY. Her verse novel, *Goldboat*, will be published this month by Houghton Mifflin.

REUEL DENNEY was born twenty-seven years ago in New York City, was educated at Dartmouth, and now lives in Buffalo. He has appeared several times here and is the author of a book of poems, *The Connecticut River*, published recently by the Yale University Press.

RUTHVEN TODD was born in 1914 in Edinburgh and now lives in London. He has contributed to POETRY and to British magazines, and is the author of a novel, *Over the Mountain*.

GEORGE BARKER, the English surrealist poet, was introduced to our readers in 1937. Since then he has become widely known in this country, although as yet none of his books have been published here. His latest collection of poems is *Lament and Triumph*. Recently he accepted a "Chair of English Literature in Japan, but resigned after some months for impersonal reasons." He is now living in California.

BREWSTER GHISELIN, of Salt Lake City, has appeared several times in POETRY. He is on the English faculty of the University of Utah.

RALPH GUSTAFSON is a young Canadian poet now living in New York City. He is the author of a book of poems, *The Golden Chalice*.

TOM BOGGS, now living at Forsyth, Mo., is the editor of three anthologies, *51 Neglected Lyrics*, *Lyrics in Brief*, and *Lyric Moderns*.

In addition to Mr. Shapiro, the following poets make their first appearance here:

EVE MERRIAM was born in Philadelphia in 1916, educated at Pennsylvania and Columbia, and now lives in New York City. She has been an advertising copywriter and has contributed to *New Anvil*, *Black & White*,

etc. Last winter she was a member of W. H. Auden's seminar at the Writers' School.

ROBERT DAVID O'BRIEN is a young Jesuit scholastic now completing his studies at Weston College (Mass.). He has contributed to *The Saturday Review*, *Voices*, *Spirit*, etc.

HARVEY BREIT, of New York City, and LEO B. LEVY, of Berkeley, Calif., have sent us no biographical information.

Of this month's prose contributors, all but Messrs. Moore and Harper have appeared previously.

KENNETH BURKE, of Andover, N. J., is the author of *Permanence and Change* and other volumes of criticism, and is now preparing a study of Coleridge's poetics. HARRY THORNTON MOORE, of Chicago, contributes criticism to magazines and is the author of a biography of John Steinbeck. H. R. HAYS, of New York City, is the author of a play in verse, *The Ballad of David Crockett*. EUGENE JOLAS, now living in the United States, is the editor of *Transition*. PAUL GOODMAN, of New York City, was introduced with a group of poems in our July issue. ROBERT D. HARPER is a graduate student at the University of Chicago.

BOOKS RECEIVED

ORIGINAL VERSE.

Nightmare at Noon, by Stephen Vincent Benét. Farrar & Rinehart.

The Cock of Heaven, by Elder Olson. Macmillan Co.

A Winter Tide, by Robert Nathan. Alfred A. Knopf.

Weep and Prepare, by Raymond E. F. Larsson. Coward-McCann.

Towards a Personal Armageddon, by Henry Treece. James A. Decker, Prairie City, Ill.

This Fragile Fruit, by Elmo Russ. Poetry Caravan Press, Lakeland, Fla.
Desires, by Pundit Acharya. Prana Press, N. Y. C.

A Religious Garden of Verses, by Lena Myrtle Loyles. Fortuny's, N. Y. C.
Of Home and Country, by Henry Gilten. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

O Coming Age! by John Warwick Daniel III. Bruce Humphries.
From the Bamboo Broom, by Harold Gould Henderson. Japan Reference Library, N. Y. C.

Selected Poems, by Algernon Charles Swinburne. Oxford University Press.

ANTHOLOGIES, PROSE, AND PLAYS.

The Pocket Book of Verse, edited by M. E. Speare. Pocket Books Edition, N. Y. C.

Lyric Moderns, edited by Tom Boggs. James A. Decker.

Language and Reality, by Wilbur Marshall Urban. Macmillan Co.

New Poets from Old, by Henry W. Wells. Columbia University Press.

Eleven Verse Plays, by Maxwell Anderson. Harcourt, Brace & Co.

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P O E T R Y

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NOVEMBER 1940

THREE POEMS

ELEGY

LIVING and dying, hoping and despairing,
Intensely or dimly, wearily or well,
Each one according to his natural daring
Does as desire or lassitude compel.
The cinema, the campus, the grand hotel
Are the elaborate scenes of sacrifice,
Hunger like China's, hate as deep as a well,
Martyr and saint, from the vast bed they rise—
Towering figures of rock, pillars of flame and ice.

One by one they reappear: Madame Duclos,
The priest at the window, Willy the butcher's boy,

The powdered bullfighter, the dancer from Idaho,
Ahmed, Susanna, Jack, the ginger-haired spy.
Where are they going? Like dolls they wander by,
Paralyzed by an ignorance of what they seek,
Driven by an inner rage. Yet nothing but dry
Habitual, piping sounds fall when they speak.
Lonesome? Idle? Unhappy? Yes, but above all, weak.

It is the tragi-comedy of the sensitive;
Or rather, the strangle hold of history.
We try to detect the age in which we live
Lucidly, unsentimentally.
But every night we hear, all day we see
Wild contradictions of every fresh idea;
Stray figures on the boulevard suddenly
Rising out of the twisted fog appear
Like Aeschylean figures, hurled by a nameless fear.

Now as they pass a derelict majesty
Sweeps over their features. No, not quite alone,
Not wholly without meaning, they too see
Flashes of the wilderness where they have gone—
A highball, a tennis racquet, a telephone,
Each at his tongue or lunacy commands.
They pass with the millions. Love like a stone
Draws them to earth, and all the Gobi sands,
It seems, run through their skeletons, flame falls from their hands.

And now, the scenery, archaic scenery:
The hills corroded, the negress fleeing the storm,

The small guilt-stricken whine of humanity
As the old walls collapse; the hungry swarm
Silently leaving the city; the cold arm
Of England capturing time, time held in thrall
By barricades of tea; the electric form
Of the leopard poised above the waterfall;
Inaccessible lakes ruffled by the flamingo's call.

Or this: the aerodrome settling into the night,
The equestrian fountain silent and the bay
Lapping against the hulls, and the little light
Of the ship that carries the one I love away.
Down at the inn the last musicians play.
Legends of natural fears and natural loves
Move quietly through the fruit-laden tree.
Quietly. I can hear the rustle of doves.
Yet through this single scene all human terror moves.

Since after all it is vitality only
That gives love meaning and to meaning power,
Forgive the dull, the defeated and the lonely
Inventing crises, slowly beginning to cower
As they sit in their deathly fashionable tower,
As they see the pony-footed ploughboy pass,
As they scent the awful, microscopic hour
Echoed in steel, reflected in the glass,
The tread, the threatening shadow in the jungle grass.

THE ATHLETE

Brutality, the exquisite resort of the cynic,
Us too beguiled as we sat on the great veranda,
Followed with glasses the plunge
Of the sunburned airman;

We too lay dreaming on the beach as the tide went out,
We too were stung by the beauty of a voice or vision,
Patterns of fever poised with the
Grace of the osprey.

We too, each of us, made a single overwhelming
Error, crucially yielding for one split second,
Cripples pierced by the dazzling
Tanagra goddess.

For which of us has desired without self-regard,
And which of us has been slighted without self-pity?
Inventing lovers, Agatha,
Amy, Antonio?

Let us be honest, then. It is not impossible
That our crime was an incapacity to suffer,
We who adored geology
Laughed at our uncles.

Learning came then as naturally to us as sweating,
And power was a logical health-giving drink:
We raced like beagles through Sparta,
Through the woods and Hegel.

Degradation of will, degradation of reason
Gathered like fog as we stood at the iron gateway,
Waiting for hours and praying
In a dead language.

We too heard the scream arising from the quicksand,
Setting the ferns and the cups of coffee trembling,
Hunched in the Munich garden
Counting our letters.

And now we must go, and go alone forever;
Even our ancestors grunt and rise from their albums
Tangled in lavender, lightly
Trip like hyenas!

We too like moths must dart and dive as the heavenly
Flame moves past us, letting our single lives
Wither away in the very
Shadow of love.

THE VICTIMS

Ages unrecorded and provinces unsurveyed,
Passions and tyrannies unseen, labors unrepaid,
Hidden immensities of the seen and listened world,
Stir in the darkened theatre where the final act is played:

The last yellow pool left simmering in the river bed,
The boomerang hissing through the lianas; and the red
Glow of the tribal fire in the resinous depth of the forest
Lacquering each wrinkled body and apprehensive head;

The sailors quarreling and wrestling on the Cornish strand,
The washerwomen of Guadalajara ranged along the sand,
The boys combing the stallions under the giant sequoias,
The blind, illuminated cripple extending his empty hand.

Lights in the city are covered with a dark blue frost.
Lights appear in the woods: flash dangerously: and are lost.
Lights no larger than an adder's tooth in the grasses
Move through the floodlit heavens—still as a star almost.

Still runs the icy, trout-veined creek into the pond,
Still to the grass lie the dew-misted muzzle, and the hound
Sleeping beside the dying campfire, and the sentry sleeping,
Sleeping as the thin dark thread trickles along the ground.

I hear the murmur of the consumptives in the mountain pines,
I see the mathematicians laboring over their flawless signs,
I see the pudgy idealists in the swimming-pool, and the single
Flicker of light on the black and dripping faces in the mines;

I hear the feet of the soldiers moving further, further away,
The whine of the pale surrealist reciting in the café;
I see the face of William Blake; I see the torchlit faces
Of the fishermen dropping their seine-ends into the lapping bay.

Through the thicket of a nightmare the politicians rage;
What is noble being noble only in a single age,
And what is base, base only in a single circumstance,
Their armies bleed to death among the saplings and the sage.

The maniac smiling over the hedge and toying with his knife,
The syphilitic reflecting on his curious role in life,
The tipsy, unshaven war veteran bumming another smoke,
The tidy little accountant planning the murder of his wife—

They all pray to money or hate or an idol out of stone,
Overcome by a strange necessity; terribly alone;
All they thought they wanted was the look in another's eyes,
Lips meeting theirs, the touch of warm hands in their own.

They call across the fog as one by one they sink away,
"O brothers, this is what your volumes all forgot to say,
These are the hearts you falsified, the needs you all ignored;
These are the awful laws your age neglected to obey!"

Waves are approaching with the sound of a cathedral gong;
Waves, millions of waves, loaded with fish and seaweed throng
Shoreward, offering themselves as forms of heroism or escape
To those who loved too privately or suffered too long,

While you lie, lovely and careless, quiet and beyond belief,
Like the tread of a doe or the maneuvers of a thief:
Unassailable, since you are a part of the wind and water,
Your hand under my hand lying, as secret as a leaf.

Frederic Prokosch

T W O P O E M S

I

Doing anything and everything is a drug
My pen is a bitter root of oblivion, my thoughts
Force day to cover with pictures the abyss of waiting.

Then the meals interrupt and I ask For what,
For what am I waiting?

Is it for my loneliness to spring
An ascetic shoot of new power?
Or is it for her to come into the room
In her red dress and kiss my eyes to bliss
Murmuring "I love you as you love"?

For a year now I have breathed-in lies
Imagining my life was half one life, reciprocated
In another's living need.

But now that half is fallen away and I stand with my body
Split by lightning

How is it possible to believe that what divides
Me, does not deprive her too?
That somewhere she is not sweetly sorrowfully waiting
On a similar desolate shore
Feeling the same loss as I do
And knowing the same cure?

Oh, but there are posts, there are trains!
So these iron days prove

How long I have been wrong, it seems,
And how I still only swallow the truth
—That I have lost for ever her I love—
For a shrieking instant, then turn back again
To a drug of bitter days and dreams.

II

As I sit staring out of my window
Wasting time which the traffic does not waste,
Nor any of the passers by in the street
Who keep time with time as they go
Measuring the seconds with their feet,
In their minds riding the crested tide
On white horses of pursuant days
I think of you, James, at another window
With your stubby hands relaxed and your blue gaze
Invaded by a sense of emptiness,
Startled as if a gust of air,
Had blown through the interstices
Of your mind and hair,
Ruffling your forehead with a puzzled despair.

But I have learned lately that the spaces
And the timeless loneliness
Of the unfruitful waste places,
The desert, the untidy room, and the hour
Between waking and sleep,
Are windows opened onto power

Where we become most what we are,
When the conscious eye and ear
Are severed from what they see and hear
And in the hollow silent blackness deep,
Living tunes and images flower.

Stephen Spender

GREEN KEY

Extensions in the mind expand the green
Electric cord suspended in the light
Recalling all the eye has ever seen
Of greenness elsewhere variously bright,
And sight is fractured in the space beyond
As though was battered down some memory's door
Revealing whole geographies of land
Forever green and sometime seen before.
One unremittant radiance compels
All light into the focus of the past
And memory ignites a lamp which quells
The actual cold brilliance roomward cast,
Till light transcendent and awakened thought
Discover the green key to what we sought.

J. S. Mooday

SEVEN POEMS

THE OBSERVER

What a scurvy mind
whose constant death
still simulates
the forms of breath—
unable or unwilling
to own the vulgar
things which we must
do to live again
and be in love and
all its quickening
pleasures prove.

FROM A WINDOW

Here's a question for us. Help me
to find the answer. The tops
of the row of poplar trees are level
with the fourth floor of the hospital

And, Yes, says Sister Francis,
the lady in the next bed had her
baby circumcised this morning. I've
noticed that in the wards you have

to use your psychology. If the
first one doesn't eat her apple pie

especially if she is a leader the whole
ward will go without its dessert—

Heart-shaped leaves tear at their stems
outside the window of the scrub-room
while the trees rock and sway
in the broken light and a seething

sound sets off their changing colors.
What is the answer to this rivalry?

RIVER RHYME

The rumpled river
takes its course
lashed by rain

This is that now
that tortures
skeletons of weeds

and muddy waters
eat their
banks the drain

of swamps a bulk
that writhes and fat-
tens as it speeds.

THE WORLD NARROWED TO A POINT

Liquor and love
when the mind is dull
focus the wit
on a world of form

The eye awakes
perfumes are defined
inflections
ride the quick ear

Liquor and love
rescue the cloudy sense
banish its despair
give it a home.

A FOND FAREWELL

You? Why you're
just sucking
my life blood out.

What do I care
if the baker
and the garbage man
must be served.
Take what
you might give

and be damned
to you. I'm
going elsewhere.

FERTILE

You are a typical American woman
you think men grow on trees—

You want love, only love! rarest
of male fruit! Break it open and
in the white of the crisp flesh
find the symmetrical brown seeds.

THE UNKNOWN

Do you exist
my pretty bird
flying
above the snow?

Are you actually
flying
or do I imagine
it so?

Detail of wing
and breast

unquestionably
there—

Or do I merely
think you
perfect
in mid-air?

Coda

Beating heart
feather
of wing and breast

to this
bleakness
antithetical

In love
dear love, my love
detail is all

William Carlos Williams

T W O P O E M S

FALL PAUSE

Smoking walking in the November Garden
Fountains filled with leaves, the shallow lake
Choked up with smoldering leaves Here too all passion
Sinks empty: form the one monument we make.

Far finer these: sprayed elm, sprung dome of beech
Than any we, bodies shaken or crushed together,
Contrived. Like pigeons our desires fling up and settle
To the stranger's crumbs, famished in every weather.

Yet lost, denuded by loss, sinewed to learn
From the upright trunk, the bird's indomitable glare
I know that soon blood, nerves, heart will fuse to birth
The green, the perpetual season we must bear.

NOCTURNE

Five o'clock, the office is closing down.
Spate of heeltaps floods dry beds of downtown
Streets. Cars like glittering beads on a wire
Stick, spurt, twist on a squealing tire.

Another day is gushing away.
Where in the fountain's pride and play
Does the mineral virtue live?
Hands cannot hold and every cup's a sieve.

In all the little apartments the lamps are lit.
Radio roars with the comedian's tough wit.
Chop sputters on the range, paper is shucked on the floor,
None but the friend's hand will be lifted against the door.

Is there a star that rules our fate?
Will it bring us love on a silver plate?
Shall we trust the palmist's map?
Steeper the slope and every breath a trap.

Ten o'clock, in the café the super-vic
Batters the ear. Drowning numbs the tick
Of the fatal timepiece. And softly flare after flare
Desire explodes like fireworks in opium air.
Dare we believe we are not alone?
This fragment of living is all we own,
Chip of Corinthian gold
The landlights flicker, the waves are rough and cold.

Pillow at midnight, the plump and perjured friend.
Caress that fumbles to a clumsy end.
Through the nostrils sleep rises with a gaseous whiff
Of death. And then the journey to the famous cliff.

But even in the land of the storybook
Hate does not flinch beneath love's look,
Dragons trample the flowers,
Shadows with knives convulse the secret hours.

R. H. Kublike

SIGNAL HILL

The derricks have arranged a royal forest on the hill,
Oilwell Gothic cypresses soaring on one hill.

.

The loveliness goes dull in close avowals:
What have we but a tall bleak town of skeleton towers,
A fleshless town of blunted spires,
Heaven-scrapers gutted by the mind's fire.

The derrick makes a study of unmuscled wooden bones,
And elegant steel an arabesque of nerves.
The monstrous naked organs of silver curves
And hard digestion store the spurt
Of deep plutonic veins
No longer sacred to the earth: the rainbow blood
Pumps up to each rapacious heart
With slow incessant pulse through all your manhood.

Through all your years the carrier-arm must nod
In the haggard rhythm of a horse's head.
There is dull and humble talk between the wood,
And spectral songs of metal, whimpering and thin.
Sullied spirits tend the town
Of abstract shadows, the burdened breath is slow with oils:
Rich nausea spreads the nostrils sucking life.

.

Another thing is twilight on the hill of wells,
Beautiful again:

The charred steeples lean
As though the ancient strife
Of high black heroes had returned,
Their heads against the sapphire end
Of the planet's final hour,
And at their empty knees a quiet lake of wild blood.
Stars are clinging to the stripped and standing dead:
The bright stray links of mail forgot by war.

Sonia Raiziss

ALWAYS THE TIMID

Always the timid fear the secret heart,
resent the dark core unrevealed.
Always the weak deny a strength concealed
and mock a gloved and subtle art.
Being like those who quake before a cave,
picturing for themselves some bat-hung doom,
and leave it to the dreaming brave
to demonstrate from pitted gloom
the crystal springs, the onyx-paneled room.

Alice Monks Mears

DEADBBUGGY

Death is a rubbertired fact
F O B America.
A 6% investment
in a 7' plot
paid off in gold of angels tooting trumpets on that day.
Hold your teeth grampa here we go
razmadaz
bring on your rubbertired pulpits
your seventeen silvergeared moaners
your firstclass A One super special deluxe
deadbuggy
with a New York Times in every flowerpot
and the Gospel of Saint Matthew standing out before.
Enjoy yourself! You only die
once.

Lee Hays

T W O P O E M S

WORDS

No citadel of stone eternally
Withholds the wind, withstands the slanting rain;
No cliff resists the fingers of the sea;
Marble and flesh and bone are dust again.

No shield is constant, every wall bends low;
The locks of metal crumble soon or late.
But transient words which you spoke long ago
Still serve as armor against ruthless fate.

WHOEVER

Whoever puts a fence around a field
Should seed the earth,
And he who seeds the earth
Should eat the bounties which its harvests yield.

Whoever feasts upon his land's goodwill
Should build a house,
And he who builds a house
Should make a hearth against the autumn chill.

And he who sits upon his hearth of stone
Should own a bed,
And he who owns a bed
Should seldom, yes, if ever, sleep alone.

David Osborne Hamilton

FOUR POEMS

WOODEN STATUE

The sullen, seamless heaven's best
As frame and haven for these hues:
For this anomaly of gold;
The drowned leaf in the garden pool.

Old frosts have hacked their signatures
Into the oaken goddess, niched
Above the water with her child
Held close against the sapless heart.

She should be bronze: the water is:
The world is bronze: the patina
Of bronze is on the autumn trees;
Beneath the heavy, shineless heaven.

PUMPKINS

Go, send a dragon. The Hesperides,
In bumper seasons, grew no fruit like these
Great gourds of gold; these apples that the ground,
That bendless bough, has grown. The old man found
Them hanging there. Go, send a dragon straight,
To guard the shed floor gorgeous with their weight.

CLOCK

The clock gnaws noisily the bone
Of time. With teeth like rat's or weasel's
The metal rodent chisels
A sustenance from stone.

VISITOR

Come in. Familiar. Well, your features are.
The firm white scaffold underneath the face,
Viewed through the skin as green as some dead star;
Which won't clash with the color in this place;
Your father and your mother knit together
Neatly in passionate, prehistoric weather.

Come in. Come in. I knew that you would come.
In every room the phosphorus is lit.
You needn't feel your way about my home.
The rooms; the rooms; the rooms are infinite.
We'll visit some new room, my clacking friend,
This time, down corridors that have no end.

Kenneth Slade Alling

T W O P O E M S

THE SURVIVING MIRROR

This is the best picture of us
Focused on shyness, parting the eyes with light
Early morning exposure to love itself
Taken at summer's end, in summer's sight.

Glacial months still turned away from us
Flower bowls quickened with larkspur and fox-glove
Before the clock ran down to autumn bitterness
Summer bound us in sunburn, tired muscles, happy love.

Out of nothingness we had come to silver solid
Of waterfalls, to madrigals sung in the tower
Of the heart; and shining as deer horn in moonlight
Was the blowing away of each day to its final hour.

Now autumn's crust weighs red on the leaves
Birds hold symposium no more in the wood
Light lies thin and sharp on pools of ice
And the surviving mirror signals our solitude.

COMPLAINT

Complain, complain while Venus lights her light
And water snakes in ripples toward the shore
When night primroses open to the sight
Complain of what's to come, what's gone before.

The solitary traveler returns
With memory of an aromatic vine
Of brush and chaparral the desert burns
And mountains looked at that have stretched the spine.

The solitary voyager reflects
The Sphinx of Egypt, and the Syrian ghost
Wine, wounds, and water, and their long effects
And voyages wherein his name was lost.

Madeline Gleason

POEM

I wore a cloak of music from my dreams,
Gilt-thread for joy and jet for years of sin,
Brodered the edges with the lace of love
Tinted to grey with tears no eyes could hold.

And with this cloak about me, over streams
That led to Heaven's hills, I ran,
Crying aloud my father's name. His dove
Dropped from the boughs of Paradise. Unfurled,

The wings of wisdom warned me, many times
The blows upon my heart bade me begone.
Yet thrust I sunward, till at close of eve
I saw my father—nailed across the world.

Henry Treece

T H R E E P O E M S

THE BROOK

Excite in me the stream's strict logic—
The winter-cell approved, the leaf's
Economy in an important general election;
The stream, train-like, in unknown grass
Moves with the pressure of its blood
That first leaf apart from port.

Call grass cadaverous thatch betraying
None of the rising century beneath;
I have investments in the winter's cyst, where none
But Tennyson paid close attention
With English humor to the analogy of river,
Whose sex was summer in its season.

In me, the love-secreting animal
Hears with his brutish ears, indifferently,
Eclogue of foreign observer with stream;
Knowing the zone in its trembling technic
As water, pleasureless, within its valley.

A POEM

for Allen Tate

How would this house react, were leaves
To come again upon its common wood;
The wood-bird nesting where its rafters
Stood, in the grey gloomed dusk, where now
We stand like children staring
At its nest upon the topmost bough.

When to the sessions of its change,
The mind romantic to extremity,
Converts at will, the dead or dying wood
Back to a life, green-boughed, of sensitivity,
And myth returns the wood-bird to its range
In the warm glooms, by a new destiny pursued—

Unperceived, we are, in Allen's phrase,
Tough babes in woods made feverish by our brains,
Where horror lurks in darkened offices,
And beasts beyond reproach parade the frieze,
Snarling at agents of these unnatural trees
Charged, by imagination, to our bones.

THE PARADOX

The stream that through my tunnels roared,
The child, conscious of ascension, saw;
Saw in the flames that from my head
Leapt from their trigger-stems, and Father stood
Based on his art, and watched the burning bush
Consume the child, and reinforce his strength,
Giving to it the gift it could not use,
Before the darkness and the personal loss.

And there, my Mother subsided by my end;
Outside of time, yet resident, she took,
Bright as the murder sired by incestuous sin,
Both leaf and flower of the original book,
And built an empty platform for the tree
Soon to be nourished by the backward look;
The perfect engine for the model crime
That mechanics built, yet could not run.

O, Father and Mother both were for their time
Innocent, and saw the flower from which the seed
Dropped fertilized, tracing its sovereign route
From man into the boy and back again, and saw
The gallows suspended from the neck
Of the haunting spectre, and there they died;
The innocent and poor who saw beyond
The challenge to the implacable good.

Both failed; here was the season for the rougher child,
Whose hands itched for the throttle, yet he too failed,
In favor of the younger, sickly son
Conceived for the sacrifice, while I stood by,
Brother and prophet, where in that room,
None saw the back wall move, nor the candle
Flicker when the first breath ended in a cry
Against the miracle; none saw the bush

Dart up beyond the shadows, nor saw the flame
That touched it briefly, wounding not the tree,
That could not burn—or burning, miraculously
Renewed itself—while the blood rotted out my veins,
And Mother lay ash-ridden, and Father stood
Being Father to the awful glare
Of Heaven, involved in the paradox
Of Death that cried out, dying, its own prodigy.

John Nerber

A NOTE ON YVOR WINTERS

WHAT is most valuable about Yvor Winters as a critic is just what is most valuable about him as a poet: his power of controlled discernment of matters usually only observed fragmentarily, by the way, willy-nilly, with the merely roving eye. His observations carry the impact of a sensibility which not only observed but modified the fact at hand; and we feel the impact as weight, as momentum, as authority. The weight is of focused knowledge, the momentum that of a mind which has chosen—by an ethic of the imagination—its direction, and the authority is the authority of tone: the tone of conviction that cannot be gainsaid without being undone. The weight and momentum, as we feel them, give our sense of value—of the reality and exigence of what is said. The tone of authority, however, variously emphasizes, impedes, or irritates—for it appears in the guise of explicit assertions of fact and affords the reader sensations—our sense of the validity of the judgments it is meant to buttress. This is another way of saying that Mr. Winters does not apparently find enough authority within his sensibility—in the very tone of experience itself—and is compelled to resort to constructions of the mind outside the data of experience, either because they ought to be given or because they are consonant with the emotion of what has been given. When it happens that these constructions are not disparate from those of his audience, they are successful, though not thereby valid in themselves; and emphasize the point of what he actually brings to view. When, on the other hand, the constructions are seen conspicuously to be imported, the audience tends to feel, for the most part with injustice, that their invalidity vitiates the whole operative force

of the sensibility. Men everywhere are unwilling to trust, to confide, either in the work their own minds do or in that which they see actually performed by the minds of others, though that is all they have in either case finally to depend on. They are driven rather to accept or dismiss, to foster or destroy, the little work actually done in terms of work not done at all, but merely imputed. At least, this is so of every imaginative field; of religion, of politics, of philosophy, and of literary criticism.

Mr. Winters is one of these men, but only conspicuously so because his set of intellectual constructions are not superficially in keeping with those abroad in our time, and only dangerously so because his constructions occasionally permit him to issue in judgments which would be untenable without them. His elevation of Jones Very above Emerson, Bridges and Sturge Moore above Yeats, Williams above Pound and Eliot, and Edith Wharton above Henry James, taken together with the applications of his construction of the fallacy of expressive form, furnish examples both of what is dangerous and what is conspicuous. They make an artificial barrier—himself he might call it the framework—which obscures but does not touch the work he has actually performed. It is the purpose of this note, if not to remove, then to show how transparent and artificial that barrier is.

If only Mr. Winters had been dead twenty odd centuries like Plato and Aristotle, or three generations like Arnold and Pater, the task would be easy and grateful; for it would amount to little more than remarking that most of the principles of thought turn out to be foibles of manner and crotchetts of personality: touchstones that get in the way of the facts if taken seriously, but illuminating enough if taken, as they mostly are, as contrib-

utory facets of fact. But Mr. Winters is alive and uncommonly kicking; and to deprive him, by mere fiat, of his principles and his prejudices, would be so much to anticipate history as to seem amputation. Like everybody else he thinks he needs the assurance of his principles to reassure his prejudices; just as the reader, doubtless, would be terribly deprived on his part, for in a critic where principle and prejudice were minimized it would be necessary to read every word with attention, as in a poem or any table of values

Which is precisely the burden which Mr. Winters' real work unremittingly imposes. His intimacy with the matter-and-form of poetry and imaginative prose, when it exists at all, is genuine and complete and stirring; it is also infectious. The reader who ignores the obstacle race of irrelevant formulation and incompatible comparison and returns straight to the matter-and-form considered will find Mr. Winters has given him, in just payment for attention, an access of intimacy both accurate and viable in detail. an advantage of position from which the whole labor of principle seems wilful, if expedient, waste.

The expedience we will come to, and end on; here let us represent the intimacy, and let us do so in the form of a tribute. No reader willing to see what Mr. Winters plainly demonstrates in his studies of the experimental school of American poetry (in *Primitivism and Decadence* chiefly, but also in uncollected reviews, particularly of Crane and Williams) will be able to avoid the conviction that the incompleteness, confusion, and ultimate emptiness of that poetry *as a school* are radical, and due to a wrong objective, namely: poetry without subject-matter. No critic has done more to deflate, in detail, specifically, under your nose and in your mouth, the final value of

poetry, however otherwise valuable, which fails to declare its subject. No critic has done more both to restore both a sense for the need of objective substance and to indicate the modes by which it may be secured if it is there to secure. (No one, obviously, can set snares for woodcock that can't fly.) Again, (in the same book and the same reviews), Mr. Winters has done a great deal towards developing a usable set of notions about metre; whether they are the right notions or the only notions, and whether Mr. Winters' applications of them are always correct, matters relatively little; they are usable in a field wide enough to include Pound, Williams, Tate, Eliot, Yeats, Marianne Moore, Crane—anybody you will. Metre, like substance, had tended to disappear from consideration, which is to say had passed beyond control, and therefore did its work badly; rather running away with than sustaining, or on the other hand rather imprisoning than supplying motive-power to the efforts of developing sensibility, whether compositional or appreciative. Metre still tends to disappear, just as subject-matter still tends to fail to eventuate; the fallacy which Mr. Winters calls expressive form is still with us; but the congeries of critical opinion and the habits of poetic practice have been enough modified in the last ten years to make the following summary statement of the metrical virtues generally acceptable. Neither deliberate privation of medium nor wilful defect of sensibility is esteemed for cultivation. Mr. Winters' metrical virtues therefore involve the virtues of sensibility. For metre: "coherence of movement, variety of movement, and fine perceptivity . . . in a system in which every detail is accounted for. Every syllable must be recognizably in or out of place; . . . in brief, the full sound-value of every syllable must be willed for a particular end, and must

be precise in the attainment of that end. . . . Traditional metre . . . tends to exploit the full possibilities of language; experimental metre . . . is incomplete. . . . Experimental conventions in general tend to abandon comprehensible motive, to resort to unguided feeling; similarly experimental metre loses the rational frame which alone gives its variations the precision of true perception." Anyone who grew up, as I did, between 1920 and 1930, will appreciate the change in poetic weather which these fragmentary quotations indicate, and will regret, as I do, that the change was not sooner felt. I believe that Mr. Winters is as responsible as anybody that the change has been felt at all.

Mr. Winters' background point of view, and the same faculty of controlled discernment of illuminating fact, which produced the valuable aspects of his essays on modern poetry, are also responsible for the seven studies in American obscurantism which he calls *Maule's Curse*: the curse that required of Hawthorne, Cooper, Melville, Dickinson, Poe, Emerson and Very, Henry James, and the culture which they express, that they drink or shed their own blood: the curse of inadequacy, on the expressive level, of life lived. It seems to me that every fact and almost all the interpretative or explanatory observations brought forward in these studies are both pertinent and useful. No-one who reads the section on Poe will be content to accept him indifferently thereafter, and no-one who reads the quotations from Cooper will risk dismissing him indifferently, though I doubt that in either case many readers will share Mr. Winters' extremes of opinion. Similarly, the remarks on James may well limit appreciation, as those on Melville will deepen it of those writers. The essays on Hawthorne and on Dickinson seem to me to achieve more, though they intended no more, than the others,

possibly because of a greater native sympathy in the critic; they may be taken as tolerably complete versions of their subjects, but without any effect of substitution—the reader is driven back, guided and controlled with the sympathy of right preparation, to experience what is offered and to miss only what is not there. The essay on Jones Very and Emerson, by contrast, at least to me, is at its critical point an act of substitution: the substitution of a superficial attack upon Emerson (an attack, I mean, which strikes nowhere near the centre of Emerson, his extraordinary and fertile sensibility, but only upon the incoherence of its periphery) in order to elevate the absolutism, the rigid mysticism, of Jones Very: a substitution performed in lieu of critical observation in the interests of Mr. Winters' own intellectual predilections. It is good to have Jones Very; and there is no harm in Mr. Winters employing his prejudice in the discovery; but it is a very dangerous kind of criticism which judges one writer advantageously by applying *merely* prejudice, as appears here, to another writer. The danger is the vitiation of the very standards the prejudice is meant to support.

A closer illustration may be seen in the comparison of James and Mrs. Wharton to the disadvantage of James; closer, because no sooner does Mr. Winters make his comparison than he comes, with justice, to deny that, after all, Mrs. Wharton's orderly competence—my summary of what Mr. Winters attributes to her—is anywhere equal to "the vast crowd of unforgettable human beings whom" James created. Here Mr. Winters was compelled by his experience of it to return—despite its diffuseness, its mad concentration upon detail, its confusion at crucial points of morals with manners, its lapses from the advantage of plot—to what James actually everywhere exposed, an inviolable and inex-

haustible sensibility. That return is the obligation of the critic as it is the necessity, for survival, of the writer. The point about Mr. Winters is that he returns often enough so that we can afford to dismiss him where he does not: we lose little to gain much

What we lose, if I may reverse the language of religion, we tend to find in a different, less annoying, more appropriate place. For example, in this nexus, if we apply the weight of Mrs. Wharton to the mass of Henry James and see just where it bears—see just how Mr. Winters did actually apply it—it modifies without diminishing our sense of the mass of James. We know better what *James* is; which is the object of criticism. Something similar is true of the relation between Very and Emerson, Moore and Yeats, Bridges or Mrs. Daryush and Eliot or Pound. It is only by a kind of mechanical inadvertence almost universal in intellectual operations that Mr. Winters himself would have us see more; or, to use a more familiar (though hiddenly more complex) term, it is only a difference in the *operation* of taste that comes between us. Which explains the justice of Mr. Winters' charge that Poe had no taste to operate, and that Emily Dickinson could not control the operation of hers.

To make these observations is not, I think, to injure the frame of Mr. Winters' thought; certainly it does not vitiate the moral insight upon which the frame rests; it merely reduces thought taken as principle back to the condition of thought taken as value, as discrimination, as an order, among other orders, of discernment, which is the condition or level where it is most useful in the reading or composition of literature, or for that matter, of religion or philosophy or politics. Here we come to the point of expedience where we began. Without the expedience of his

principles—the logic of his taste, and without the exaggerations and irrelevances to which they led him, Mr. Winters could probably have gotten nowhere with the aspects of American poetry and fiction which absorbed his instinctive attention. It may even have been his principles which let him see what he sees. For his subject was confusion, confusion of mode, subject, source, and flux; and the best, or at any rate the quickest way to clarify a confusion is by imposing, as you think, an order upon it which you have derived elsewhere, whether from the general orthodoxy or from your special heresy of the orthodox—your version of the superrational. Actually, of course, you do no such thing, except so far as you fall into error; actually you find, discern, the order which already exists in the confusion before you and of which you form, by sheer egocentricity, the integrating part. Order is the objective form of what you know, and reaches its highest value as familiarity, its lowest as boredom, conscious or not. In between lie the operative reaches of error, heresy, shock, and irritation: the confusion that fills or the speculative leap that crosses the gaps in discernment. Orthodoxy, which is the order of orders and absorbs them, is not for the individual. It is honest, as well as prudent, in setting up an order to leave room for disorder, which is merely the order you have not yet discerned. The difficulty is great and usually insuperable, such is the pride, and the fear beneath the pride, of intellect. But if you fail, others who come after you will do it for you, seeing, as they will with enough effort, that your order is but the condition of the disorder they, and you, both find.

It is my contention that Mr. Winters knows all this is practice, and that if you will permit yourself to know what he knows you will be able both to ignore and to profit by the mere provisional

form of his argument. It is the sensibility, in the end, that absorbs, and manifests like light, the notion of order.

For what it is worth, as a sort of postscript to this whole context, is not the following couplet the sensibility declaring order rather than the intellect inviting anarchy?

Allez! Steriles ritournelles!
La vie est vraie et criminelle!

R. P. Blackmur

R E V I E W S

THE HONEST MAN ALONE

The Last Ditch, by Louis MacNeice. The Cuala Press, Dublin.

MR. MACNEICE has always stood somewhat apart from the other poets who have been writing in England since 1930. As he contemplated the life of his time in that increasingly sinister decade he was reluctant to join the shouting on either side: without Auden's boisterousness and confidence in diagnosis, Day Lewis' straightforward appraisal of present and future, or the personal-cum-political lyricism of Spender, he expresses with a disturbing calm the deliberate listlessness of the unhappy liberal who lived in the terrible twilight of the 1930s. His first volume (*Poems*, 1935) set the tone and attitude which has continued to be characteristic of him. The prevailing mood of these early poems is that of a rainy Sunday afternoon in a British industrial town. The dull futility of a routine civilization oozes out of such poems as *Morning Sun* and *Insidia*, while over all hangs the numb anticipation of war:

Having bitten on life like a sharp apple
Or, playing it like a fish, been happy,

Having felt with fingers that the sky is blue,
What have we after that to look forward to?
Not the twilight of the gods but a precise dawn
Of swallow and grey bricks and newsboys crying war.

We note in the poems of the 1935 volume a combination of precision in phrasing with looseness in structure and rhythms, and we have the feeling that the looseness corresponds to a deliberate disorganization in the poet's mind:

I do not want to be reflective any more
Envyng and despising unreflective things . . .

The impression of a lonely and undeluded honesty that we get from this first book of poems is borne out by the second (*The Earth Compels*, 1938). Here the verse is technically more disciplined, as though MacNeice has pulled himself together and realized that if he is going to write poetry at all he had better master some technical points. But the same dull tone is here, even in the translation of an ode of Horace. Against this meaningless background the love emotion emerges sporadically—glimpses of Venus in the shadow of storm-troopers. And always the all-but-hopeless picture returns:

On those islands
Where many live on the dole or on old-age pensions
And many waste with consumption and some are drowned
And some of the old stumble in the midst of sleep
Into the pot-hole hitherto shunned in dreams
Or falling from the cliff among the shrieks of gulls
Reach the bottom before they have time to wake . . .
On those islands
Where no train runs on rails and tyrant time
Has no clock-towers to signal people to doom
With semaphore ultimatums tick by tick,
There is still peace but not for me and not
Perhaps for long—still peace on the level hills
For those who still can live as their fathers lived
On those islands.

The remoter parts of Ireland and Scotland supply a sad chorus to

the song of a tired civilization. We can compare the concluding poem of *Letters from Iceland* (a volume which MacNeice and Auden produced together).

Bagpipe Music (also in *The Earth Compels*) provides a good example of MacNeice's calm and uncomplicated irony:

John MacDonald found a corpse, put it under the sofa,
Waited till it came to life and hit it with a poker,
Sold its eyes for souvenirs, sold its blood for whiskey,
Kept its bones for dumb-bells to use when he was fifty . . .

It's no go my honey love, it's no go my poppet;
Work your hands from day to day, the winds will blow the profit.
The glass is falling hour by hour, the glass will fall for ever,
But if you break the bloody glass you won't hold up the weather.

The irony here is derived from simple contrasts, and the resultant humor is distinctly macabre. MacNeice's poetic dialectic is always simple—and this has annoyed some of the sophisticated—but none the less effective. After all, the tragedy which is at the back of all his work is only too simple. And MacNeice is too honest to paint the world as frustrated and not the poet in it. He is never a spectator, like the early Auden, or a tragic chorus like Spender. The disease of the times is shown through him.

MacNeice possesses a dramatic quality that comes out clearly in such a poem as *Eclogue Between the Motherless*—with greater effectiveness there, perhaps, than in his play *Out of the Picture* (1937) where the flushed liveliness is less convincing than the calmer note of the poems. He can use language sharply and cleanly when he wants to (his translation of the *Agamemnon* shows that) but too often sheer resignation lets his diction become flabby and his thought dull. There are stanzas in the new volume which flop badly:

I wonder if in a year
Democracy will be dead
Or what is more to the point —
If I shall be dead.

That numbness of feeling can produce sloppy poetry is also proved by parts of *Autumn Journal* (1939), a series of personal reactions to the events of the last four months of 1938. Written in immediate response to contemporary events—both personal and political—this series of discursive poems naturally lacks plan and cohesion, and sometimes MacNeice is merely thinking aloud with a casualness which is only saved from prolixity by his ability to pause at intervals and gather up his previous thought in a single image or a sharp and brief fable. We find in *Autumn Journal* the same general mood of the earlier poems—the honest man alone in the twilight—heftened at times by the sharpness of the political situation in the immediately pre- and post-Munich days. But heightened emotion will not in itself produce form in poetry, and more than once the reader has the impression that the author is too sad and tired to bother to integrate his verses:

And negotiation wins,
If you can call it winning,
And here we are—just as before—safe in our skins;
Glory to God for Munich.
And stocks go up and wrecks
Are salved and politicians' reputations
Go up like Jack-on-the-Beanstalk; only the Czechs
Go down and without fighting.

The honest man is clearly not necessarily a poet

And now we have *The Last Ditch*, a slight collection of occasional poems—twenty-four in all—published in very pleasing format by the Cuala Press. The opening poem, *Prognosis*, is a simple and arresting little piece, which seems to mean more than

it does on account of the cunning ambiguity of the fable:

Goodbye, Winter,
The days are getting longer,
The tea-leaf in the teacup
Is herald of a stranger.

Will he bring me business
Or will he bring me gladness
Or will he come for cure
Of his own sickness? . . .

Will his name be John
Or will his name be Jonah
Crying to repent
On the Island of Iona?

And the final stanza:

Will his name be Love
And all his talk be crazy?
Or will his name be Death
And his message easy?

MacNeice has clearly cleaned his pen since writing *Autumn Journal*; though the sharp strokes have not the overtones he seems to have intended them to possess. One suspects his reason for choosing the Island of Iona—the rhyme is suspiciously nice and neat.

There follow ten poems with the general title, *The Coming of War*. The first of these, *Dublin*, is written in that over-loose jog-trot to which we have already objected. The third, *Cushenden*, is wholly successful: a descriptive poem expressing the poet's mood through carefully patterned imagery, it moves carefully to its effectively under-stated climax:

Fuchsia and ragweed and the distant hills
Made as it were out of clouds and sea.
All night the bay is plashing and the moon
Marks the break of the waves . . .

Forgetfulness brass lamps and copper jugs
And home-made bread and the smell of turf or flax

And the air a glove and the water lathering easy
And convolvulus in the hedge.
Only in the dark green room beside the fire
With the curtains drawn against the winds and waves
There is a little box with a well-bred voice:
What a place to talk of War.

A slight thing, but neatly done. The rest of this group hover between the pedestrian jog of *Dublin* and the restrained lyricism of *Cushenden*.

For the rest, there are little descriptive poems, character sketches, reflections, some written after the beginning of the war, others written earlier. The collection is clearly not an important contribution to MacNeice's poetic output: like so many others, he is marking time these days and re-adjusting himself to the foreseen yet shattering present. The voice of the poet has not yet come through the louder cries of the day, and it would be foolish to expect it thus early. The British poets, in particular, can hardly be expected to go forward on their literary careers at normal speed. If they keep their thinking honest and their tools oiled they will be able to speak effectively when the time comes. This little volume is perhaps MacNeice's oiling of his tools: of his honesty there has never been any question.

If it is true, we might add, that "poetry takes its origin in emotion recollected in tranquillity," we have a long time to wait for another important volume from the other side of the Atlantic —perhaps even from this side. But perhaps it is not true, and perhaps there is some significance in Day Lewis' quotation from Herman Melville: "But even so, amid the tornadoed Atlantic of my being, do I myself still centrally disport in mute calm."

David Daiches

"TWENTY YEARS AT HARD LABOR"

In What Hour, by Kenneth Rexroth. The Macmillan Co.

Examples of Kenneth Rexroth's verse are by now familiar to readers of the literary and poetry journals (who may or may not confuse him with the two other Kenneths—Fearing and Patchen); this, however, is his first book. As an integrated performance it is less than notable; in many of the poems, the time-honored sources—Eliot, Pound, Stevens, Crane, Auden—fairly crackle from the page. Rexroth makes little effort to harmonize these loyalties; the result is a book hag-ridden by antecessors, of whom none contradict the critical truism: that their strength lies in their defiance of successful imitation.

Liberal citation from *In What Hour* might substantiate these remarks, but more significant is the case of Rexroth himself. He is, I believe, an "objectivist" (which is to say, a streamlined "imagist"—Pound has on occasion given his name and capacious blessing to both cliques); but the tag implies little that the verse itself cannot better demonstrate. The logomachic style, by any other name, would be as apparent; here articulation is further impeded by the ambiguity of the unarticulated idea. Rexroth's countenancing of a purgation and a correction (presumably Marxian) of modern society is obliquely expressed. The symptoms of his dissatisfaction are those common to all of his generation—all, that is, but the misanthropic few. The poet, eating, remembers the starving Spaniard; a transport plane reminds him of bombed civilians, and so on, until the swollen guilt-sense intoxicates his being with neural bewilderment. What is he to do? Like another Californian, he might forswear all communal sympathies and marry the hawk; but again, like Nicola Sacco, he

might fight and fall "for the conquest of the joy of freedom for . . . the poor workers." Of this dilemma, and its consequences to the poetic sensibility, Philip Henderson has written intuitively and at length in his book, *The Poet and Society*.

Rexroth's fulminations lack the pyrotechnics that make Auden exciting reading, but they are no less incoherent than the worst of Auden for being more cryptically conceived. Yeats's remark that "We make out of the quarrel with others rhetoric, but of the quarrel with ourselves, poetry," requires an addendum to validate the propagandizing function of rhetoric—a function, no doubt, to which Rexroth, like Auden, subscribes *ex animo*. But if Auden's career has incited a plethora of rhetoric, Eliot's has not; it remains to Rexroth to harness the pair together in such lines as:

Before the inevitable act,
The necessity of decision,
The pauper broken in the ditch,
The politician embarrassed in the council,
Before the secret connivance,
Before the plausible public appearance,
What are the consequences of this adultery?

Elsewhere, Stevens is respectfully saluted:

The avid eyes of gravid mice entice
Each icy nostrum of the zodiac, *etc.*,

and there are "letters" to Auden and to Yvor Winters, a repudiation of Santayana, and an exercise in Whiteheadian objectivity called *Organum*. Pervasive throughout the non-political items (they are few) is the predilection for "daring" metaphors and word-combinations suggestive of that disconsolate incantator, Hart Crane.

I am not unaware of the dangers of this "I've seen *you* before"

indictment; Rexroth might conceivably have the stuff of a superior poet despite any number of derivations, but the hint of inadequate assimilation carried by the present book is too constant for easy dismissal. The poet has little that is new to say, and his devices for speech are fully as familiar as the polemic itself. In the poem, *August 22, 1939*, he describes his literary career thus far as "twenty years at hard labor." If that is so, we could scarcely expect his poems to be greatly unlike those articles fashioned by prison inmates for a stipend. I dislike stressing the parallel, but the Rexroth of *In What Hour* sorely needs either a change of occupation or a parole.

William FitzGerald

THE MEANING OF CRASHAW

Richard Crashaw: A Study in Baroque Sensibility, by Austin Warren. Louisiana State University Press.

The chief purpose of this study, Mr. Warren explains, is to translate "the twentieth-century reader of Crashaw into the position of one who, three centuries ago, was informed upon the principal movements in English and Continental religion and art, and conversant with Latin, Italian, and English poetry. The translation can never be complete, but to the extent that it is incomplete, the *communication* between Crashaw and us is imperfect, and to that extent we do not receive *his* poem but intercalate parts of our own. It is the humble use of scholarship to ensure, so far as its knowledge extends, that when we read the poetry of three centuries ago we attain the *poet's meaning*."

At least four of the five chapters are concerned with the neces-

sary preliminary of "scholarship." In these chapters, Mr. Warren compresses a great deal of fascinating material on "The Laudian Movement and the Counter-Reformation," "The Man," "Interlude: Baroque Art and the Emblem," "The Reputation." There are many things that one can praise in these chapters: the admirable selection of sources, the richness of explanatory materials in the text and notes, the brilliant originality in matters of both scholarly investigation and critical synthesis.

Readers of POETRY will perhaps be most interested, with Mr. Warren, in the fourth and longest chapter of the book: "The Poetry." This chapter is most important because in it Warren gets to the essential business of his study of Crashaw: to find out the "organic 'meaning' of rhythm, image, and word as begot by the 'maker,'" to "attain the *poet's* meaning." In this regard Warren advocates in theory a kind of "intrinsic" or "autotelic" approach to literary criticism which attempts to evaluate a poem as a poem and not as a biographic or socio-economic document. In this regard, too, Warren may be said to belong to the critical school of I. A. Richards, T. S. Eliot, Robert Penn Warren, Cleanth Brooks, Jr., John Crowe Ransom, Ronald S. Crane—to mention only a few.

Like most of his confreres, Warren is somewhat better in his theoretical negations—A poem is not biography, a poem is not history, etc.—than in his attempts to point out positively and concretely the "organic 'meaning'" of a particular poem. For one thing, Warren's interest in the baroque "spirit" of Crashaw's day inclines him to come perilously close to the "analogical" type of literary criticism, which is so fond of interpreting literature in terms of any and every other art. Such a statement as "poetry is less and more than painting, less and more than music"

does not tell us a great deal about poetry, painting, or music. Similarly, the discussion of baroque art occasionally uses the *Geistesgeschichte* approach (probably unintentionally, since Warren has expressly repudiated this school) in analogizing from architecture to painting to sculpture to theology to the emblem to—poetry. As Professor Ronald S. Crane has described it (in *Philological Quarterly*, April 1935), one aspect of this approach is to consider "whatever art may be selected in terms not of its own proper evolution but rather of analogies set up between it and the other arts that flourished at the same time." To be sure, Warren does not base his criticism of poetry altogether, or even in great part, on broad aesthetic analogies; but to the degree that he does, he strays from his expressed intention to investigate the *organic* meaning of Crashaw's poetry.

Moreover, when considering a poem in terms of its own composition, Warren is too frequently contented with making merely prosodical or grammatical or rhetorical statements. Valuable as such statements are, they do not constitute the final reading of a poem *qua* poem. But his statements *are* valuable. Cutting rather more deeply into the core of poetry than, say, Tillotson on Pope, Ainsworth on Collins, or Matthiessen on Eliot, Warren causes Crashaw's poems to emerge with a richness of meaning that they could not possibly have had previously for even the careful reader

Leo Shapiro

ANNOUNCEMENT OF AWARDS

THIS year again *POETRY* has the pleasure of announcing six prize awards. We list them with grateful acknowledgement to the donors:

The Helen Haire Levinson Prize, awarded for the twenty-sixth time through the generosity of Mr. Salmon O. Levinson, the internationally distinguished Chicago lawyer and publicist.

The Guarantors Prize, awarded for the twenty-seventh time; presented this year again by the Friday Club, a society of Chicago women which has financed, ever since 1922, a number of *POETRY*'s prizes.

The Oscar Blumenthal Prize for Poetry, founded in 1936 by Mr. Charles M. Leviton of Chicago, and to be given annually as a memorial to a great student and admirer of modern verse by his close friend.

The Jeannette Sewell Davis Prize, awarded for the sixth time, and to be continued annually by three friends of the magazine in memory of a lover of poetry.

The Harriet Monroe Memorial Prize, initiated in 1937 by Mrs. Inez Cunningham Stark of Chicago, a friend of *POETRY*'s founder and of the magazine; to be continued annually.

The Harriet Monroe Lyric Prize, awarded for the fourth time through the generosity of Marion Strobel (Mrs. James Herbert Mitchell) of Chicago; to be continued annually.

The editors and advisory committee of *POETRY* constitute the jury of awards. Poems by members of the jury are not considered for prizes. It has also been against our policy to repeat the awarding of individual prizes. Under this rule the following poets

of our twenty-eighth year are *hors concours*: E. E. Cummings and Maurice Lesemann for the Levinson Prize; Winfield Townley Scott, John Gould Fletcher, Elder Olson, Willard Maas, and William Carlos Williams, for the Guarantors Prize; Dylan Thomas and Maxwell Bodenheim, for the Blumenthal Prize; John Malcolm Brinnin, for the Davis Prize; H. B. Mallalieu, for the Harriet Monroe Memorial Prize.

We proceed with the awards, which are made for poems printed during the past year in Volumes LV and LVI of POETRY (October 1939 through September 1940), with reference also to each poet's general achievement or promise.

THE HELEN HAIRE LEVINSON PRIZE, of one hundred dollars, for a poem or group of poems by an American citizen published in POETRY during its twenty-eighth year is awarded to

ROBINSON JEFFERS

of Carmel, California, for *Come, Little Birds*, printed in the October 1939 issue, and in recognition of the high merit of his contribution to modern literature.

This prize has been previously awarded as follows:

CARL SANDBURG (1914); VACHEL LINDSAY (1915); EDGAR LEE MASTERS (1916); CLOYD HEAD (1917); J. C. UNDERWOOD (1918); H. L. DAVIS (1919); WALLACE STEVENS (1920); LEW SARETT (1921); ROBERT FROST (1922); EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON (1923); AMY LOWELL (1924); RALPH CHEEVER DUNNING (1925); MARK TURBYFILL (1926); MAURICE LESEMANN (1927); ELINOR WYLIE (1928); MARJORIE ALLEN SEIFFERT (1929); HART CRANE (1930); EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY (1931); MARIANNE MOORE (1933); HORACE GREGORY (1934); MARY BARNARD (1935); ROBERT PENN WARREN (1936); LOUISE BOGAN (1937); H. D. (1938); E. E. CUMMINGS (1939).

THE GUARANTORS PRIZE of one hundred dollars, for a poem or group of poems published in POETRY during its twenty-eighth year, is awarded to

KENNETH FEARING

of New York City, for *Three Poems*, printed in the May 1940 issue.

This prize has been previously awarded as follows:

VACHEL LINDSAY (1913); CONSTANCE SKINNER (1914); H. D. (1915); JOHN GOULD FLETCHER (1916); ROBERT FROST (1917); AJAN SYRIAN (1918); MARJORIE ALLEN SEIFFERT (1919); EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY (1920); FORD MADDOX FORD (1921); ALFRED KREYMBORG (1922); LOLA RIDGE (1923); AMANDA BENJAMIN HALL (1924); LEONORA SPEYER (1925); AGNES LEE (1926); MALCOLM COWLEY (1927); MARION STROBEL (1928); H. BONER (1929); ABBIE HUSTON EVANS (1930); WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS (1931); ELDER OLSON (1933); HILDEGARDE FLANNER (1934); WINFIELD TOWNLEY SCOTT (1935); MARYA ZATURENSKA (1936); W. H. AUDEN (1937); WILLARD MAAS (1938); STEPHEN SPENDER (1939).

THE OSCAR BLUMENTHAL PRIZE FOR POETRY, of one hundred dollars, for a poem or group of poems published in POETRY during its twenty-eighth year, is awarded to

MURIEL RUKEYSER

of New York City, for *Elegy*, printed in the October 1939 issue, and for *The Soul and Body of John Brown* (June 1940).

This prize has been previously awarded as follows:

MARION STROBEL (1936); THOMAS HORNSBY FERRIL (1937); DYLAN THOMAS (1938); MAXWELL BODENHEIM (1939).

THE JEANNETTE SEWELL DAVIS PRIZE, of one hundred dollars, for a poem or group of poems by a young poet, offered this year for the sixth time through three friends of POETRY, is awarded to

P O E T R Y : *A Magazine of Verse*

ROBERT FRIEND

of New York City, for *Four Poems*, printed in the December 1939 issue.

This prize has been previously awarded as follows:
JESSE STUART (1934); DAVID SCHUBERT (1936); WILLIAM PILLIN (1937); D. S. SAVAGE (1938); JOHN MALCOLM BRINNIN (1939).

THE HARRIET MONROE MEMORIAL PRIZE, of one hundred dollars—to be given, at the judges' discretion, preferably for a sonnet or group of sonnets published in POETRY during its twenty-eighth year—is awarded to

DAVID WOLFF

of New York City, for *The City*, printed in the January 1940 issue. This poem is not in sonnet form.

This prize has been awarded three times before, as follows:
FRANKLIN FOLSOM (1937); BELLE TURNBULL (1938); H. B. MALLALIEU (1939).

THE HARRIET MONROE LYRIC PRIZE, of one hundred dollars, for a lyric poem or group of lyric poems published in POETRY during its twenty-eighth year, is awarded to

LOUIS MACNEICE

now resident in Ithaca, New York, for *Ten Poems*, printed in the May 1940 issue.

This prize has been awarded three times before, as follows:
ROGER ROUGHTON (1937); H. H. LEWIS (1938); MALCOLM COWLEY (1939).

The above lists of previous awards should not be regarded as a complete record of the prizes given by *POETRY*. Many other awards, ranging from \$100 to \$500, have been made during the history of the magazine. The reader is referred to our November 1936 issue for a nearly complete list of poets honored by earlier prizes.

We again strongly recommend, to individual patrons and to clubs alike, the endowment of poetry prizes and scholarships similar to those given annually, in the larger American communities and abroad, to painters, sculptors, architects, and musicians. In order to encourage such endowments, either as gifts or bequests, it is our privilege to suggest two plans which offer as much freedom as possible from local and conservative prejudice. The editors will be glad to correspond with anyone interested.

N E W S N O T E S

IN spite of the war, new magazines continue to come out of England. Now, a twice-quarterly which reflects the shortage of paper in its format and its streamlined articles, represents the position of the Peace Pledge Union—"positive pacifism." "Moral and mental power are the only enduring forces, and in the end will triumph over evil. But the fewer of us lay aside their principles for the duration, the sooner will that triumph occur." Among the contributors are George Woodcock (the editor), Frederic Prokosch, Nicholas Moore, H. B. Mallalieu, Keidrych Rhys, and Terénce Heywood. Julian Symons contributes some *Notes on the Poet and War*, in which he says that the poet, as poet, can do nothing about the war. "It is advisable at this time to think about style, to write very carefully, and therefore to absent oneself from the war as much as possible. . . . It is not easy to think of other things during an air raid or bayonet practice; but it is necessary."

The editors of *Kingdom Come*, "*The Magazine of War-time Oxford*," take the position that the intellectual can no longer stand apart, that "he must fight with the throng to preserve that individuality which for a time he may lose but which in the event of a Nazi triumph he will lose for

always. . . . Only an allied victory can preserve the thinker, the scholar, and the creative artist." Among the poets who contribute are H. B. Mallalieu, Ruth Pitter, George Woodcock, Frederic Prokosch, Terence Heywood, and Ruthven Todd.

In America a new bi-monthly, *Diogenes*, is scheduled to make its appearance before these notes are published. *Diogenes*, edited by Arthur Blair and Frank Jones, Box 2035, Madison, Wis., will be devoted chiefly to poetry and criticism, and promises to introduce in translation the work of important foreign contemporaries not widely known in this country. Subscription is one dollar a year.

A startling commentary on Poets Reading Their Own Things—a subject on which, as everyone who has ever recited or listened knows, much can be said pro and con—comes to us from India by way of Henry Allen Moe, Secretary of the Guggenheim Foundation, who passed on a letter he received from a newspaperman in that country. Mr. Moe's correspondent, who wishes to remain anonymous, attended a *musbairā*, a poets' conclave, where he had looked forward to seeing "cloistered devotees joining muted chants perhaps of the Gardens of Shalimar, or Kotri, by the River." Therefore "it was with a degree of amazement that, expecting an evening's dulcet quatrains, I found—a football rally! No less. Six hundred stamping, shouting, cheering students. . . . On the platform the evening's entertainment consisted of recitations of their own works by twenty or more poets. In turn they got up, intoned their writings into the microphone, and sat down. But it wasn't as simple as that. Everything depends on the first couplet. Since these poets don't just speak, but must sing their lines, voice quality has much to do with their success. The first three words reveal whether a voice is rich, deep and mellow or is high and squeaky. Woe be to the performer with the latter blessing. He may have written the most arresting verse of the evening, but not even a full line of it is heard. When the student listeners have made up their minds, no delay ensues before the outbreak of catcalls and whistling. . . . But when that poet comes who can carry the crowd, the one whose voice is good and whose couplets are exciting, he is rewarded by almost breathless attention unsullied by sophisticated detachment. When he scores a *touche* a deep rumble originates in the back of the room and rolls majestically forward. 'Vah, vah,' the tribute greets him, 'bahut khub, bahut khub' . . . superb, superb."

For an American parallel it would probably be necessary to go to the ball park. The pop bottle is not subtle, but it does represent a judgment. The hurled straw hat and the bronx cheer are a response which some reading poets might prefer to the courteous apathy which is too often their reward. Or would they? . . . On the basis of considerable experience with Poets Reading Their Own Things, we conclude that it is perhaps better to let sleeping audiences lie.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

FREDERIC PROKOSCH, an American poet and novelist now living in Portugal, has contributed often to POETRY since 1930. He is the author of *The Assassins* and *The Carnival*. A third book of his poems, *Death at Sea*, will be published by Harpers this month.

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS has been a contributor since 1913. He was a member of the original Imagist group and has published many books of verse, the most recent of which is *Collected Poems*. His novel, *In the Money*, has just been published by New Directions. He lives and practices medicine in Rutherford, N. J.

STEPHEN SPENDER is one of the best-known younger English poets. He was awarded our Guarantors Prize in 1939. His latest book of poems is *The Still Centre*.

KENNETH SLADE ALLING, of Wilton, Conn., is a frequent contributor to magazines. He is the author of a recent book of poems, *Core of Fire*.

JOHN NERBER, a young American poet, was born in Michigan and is now a student at Kenyon College, Gambier, Ohio. He has appeared once before here, in December 1938.

DAVID HAMILTON is the author of a book of poems, *Four Gardens*, and of two novels, *Pale Warriors* and *Picaresque*. He is the president of a manufacturing company near Detroit.

MADELINE GLEASON lives in San Francisco. She has appeared once before, in July 1936, but has not sent us any biographical data.

J. S. MOODEY was born in Fresno, Calif., and lived on a ranch until entering college in 1930. He is now a graduate student and teaching assistant at the University of California.

The following poets appear here for the first time:

R. H. KUHLKE was born thirty years ago in Akron, Ohio, graduated from Harvard in 1934, and now works for a Boston publishing house.

SONIA RAIZISS was born in Germany and is now living in New York City, working on her thesis for a University of Pennsylvania Ph. D. She received a Guggenheim fellowship in 1937 and has contributed poems to *American Prefaces*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Commonweal*, etc.

HENRY TREECE is a young English poet of Irish-Welsh extraction. He is the author of *38 Poems*, published by the Fortune Press, and of a forthcoming book, *The Dark Stranger*.

ALICE MONKS MEARS was born in West Chester, Pa., in 1911, and now lives in Hudson, Ohio. Her poems have been published in *The Lyric*, *Voces*, and *Palms*.

LEE HAYS is an Arkansan now living in Philadelphia. He has contributed to *The New Republic*, *New Masses*, and *New Anvil*.

This month's prose writers have all appeared previously:

R. P. BLACKMUR, of Boston, is the author of a well-known book of

P O E T R Y : *A Magazine of Verse*

criticism, *The Double Agent*, and of a book of poems, *From Jordan's Delight*. This year he has begun teaching at Princeton. DAVID DAICHES, a young British poet and critic, is on the faculty of the University of Chicago. His latest book, *Poetry and the Modern World*, will be published this fall. WILLIAM FITZGERALD, of Boston, has contributed poems and criticism since 1936. He is the author of a book of verse, *Daekargus*. LEO SHAPIRO, of Chicago, is on the English faculty of De Paul University.

B O O K S R E C E I V E D

ORIGINAL VERSE.

- Cantos LII-LXXI*, by Ezra Pound. New Directions, Norfolk, Conn.
Collected Poems of Kenneth Fearing. Random House.
Against the Cold, by Witter Bynner. Alfred A. Knopf.
With Wings As Eagles, by William Rose Benét. Dodd Mead & Co.
The Arrow at the Heel, by Raymond Holden. Henry Holt & Co.
Return Again, Traveler, by Norman Rosten. Yale University Press.
People of Note, by Laurence McKinney. E. P. Dutton & Co.
New Zealand Poems, by Eileen Duggan. Macmillan Co.
Here Only A Dove, by Sister Maris Stella. St. Anthony Guild Press, Paterson, N. J.
To What Strange Altar, by Dorothy Quick. G. P. Putnam's Sons.
New Journey, by Sidney Salt. Black Faun Press, Prairie City, Ill.
Only on the West Wind, by Florida Watts Smyth. Middlebury College Press, Middlebury, Vt.
From All the Arts, by Dorothy Una Ratcliffe. Eyre & Spottiswoode, London, England.
The Beggar's Late, by Peter A. D. Baker. Favil Press, Ltd., London.
Revolt, by John Bunker. Campion Books, New York.
Sunset Hour, by Kate Kirkham. Banner Press, Atlanta, Ga.
In the Midst of Death, by Clive Sansom. Priv. ptd., Hollywood.
- ANTHOLOGIES, PROSE, AND A BIBLIOGRAPHY:
- Fear No More, A Book of Poems for the Present Time*, by living English poets. Cambridge University Press.
Sarah Lawrence Studies, Vol. III. Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville, New York.
Letters on Poetry from W. B. Yeats to Dorothy Wellesley. Oxford University Press.
A Victorian Rebel, by Lloyd Wendell Eshleman. Charles Scribner's Sons.
The State of the Nation, by Robert Lowry, Weldon Kees, Gilbert Neiman, William Saroyan, Arthur Blair, J. Calder Joseph, Alvin Levin. The Little Man Press, Cincinnati.
A Southern Bibliography: Poetry 1929-1938, compiled by Janet Margaret Agnew. Louisiana State University Library School, University, La.

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Other articles in the Autumn *Kenyon Review* include: KARL MAY: HITLER'S LITERARY MENTOR, by Klaus Mann; BASIC ENGLISH AND WORDSWORTH, by William Empson; THE IVORY TOWER ON WHEELS, by Virgil C. Aldrich; GEORGE SANTAYANA: THE PHILOSOPHER AS POET, by Philip Blair Rice.

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State of Illinois, County of Cook. Before me, a notary public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Geraldine Udell, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that she is the business manager of Poetry, and that the following is, to the best of her knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 443, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to-wit:

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P O E T R Y

A MAGAZINE OF VERSE

VOL. LVII

NO. III

DECEMBER 1940

FIVE POEMS

9, 19, 1939

THIS morning Hitler spoke in Danzig, we heard his voice.
A man of genius: that is, of amazing
Ability, courage, devotion, cored on a sick child's soul,
Heard clearly through the dog-wrath, a sick child
Wailing in Danzig, invoking destruction and wailing at it.
Here, the day was extremely hot; about noon
A south wind like a blast from hell's mouth spilled a slight rain
On the parched land, and at five a light earthquake
Danced the house, no harm done. Just now I have been amusing
myself

Watching the blood-red moon droop slowly
Into black sea through bursts of dry lightning and distant thunder.
Well: the day is a poem: but too much
Like one of Jeffers's, heavy with blood and barbaric symbols,
Painful to excess, inhuman as a hawk's cry.

FINLAND IS DOWN

Five planets and a brilliant young moon
Reach like a golden ladder from the saffron-lined sea-rim
High up the dark blue dome of heaven.
Today we saw the first flush of wild-flowers, glad was our hillside
With yellow violets and blue-eyed grass.
This beautiful day dying in such splendor is the tenth of March,
Nineteen forty; Finland today
After all her winter valor and the great war in the snow
Is beaten down by machines and multitude.
It will be long before the moon and five planets meet again;
And bitter things will have happened; not worse things.

GREAT MEN

Consider greatness.
A great man must have a following, whether he gain it
Like Roosevelt by good intentions, cajolery and bribes, or Hitler
by fanatic
Patriotism, frank lies, brutality and terror,

Without great following no greatness, it is ever the greedy
Flame on a wick dipped in the fat of millions;
No man standing alone has ever been great;
Except, most rarely, his will, passion or intellect
Have come to posthumous power and the naked spirit
Picked up a crown

Yes. Alas then, poor ghost,
Out of joint with time, hermit, martyr, starved prophet,
Were you honest while you lived? You are not now.
You have found your following and it corrupts you; all greatness
Involves betrayal, of the people by a man
Or of a man by the people. Better to have stood
Forever alone. Better been mute as a fish,
Or an old stone on the mountain, where no man comes,
But only the wilderness-eyeing hawk with her catch
And feeds in peace, delicately, with little beakfuls,
While far down the long slope gleams the pale sea.

THE STARS GO OVER THE LONELY OCEAN

Unhappy about some far-off things
That are not my affair, wandering
Along the coast and up the lean ridges
I saw in the evening
The stars go over the lonely ocean,
And the black-maned wild boar
Plowing with his snout on Mal Paso Mountain.

The old monster snuffled "Here are sweet roots,
Fat grubs, slick beetles and sprouted acorns.
The best nation in Europe has fallen,
And that is Finland,
But the stars go over the lonely ocean,"
The old black-bristled boar
Tusking the sod on Mal Paso Mountain.

"The world's in a bad way, my man,
And bound to be worse before it mends;
Better lie up in the mountains here
Four or five centuries,
While the stars go over the lonely ocean,"
Said the old father of wild pigs
Plowing the fallow on Mal Paso Mountain.

"Keep clear of the fools that talk democracy
And the dogs that talk revolution,
Drunk with talk, liars and believers.
I believe in my tusks.
Long live freedom and damn the ideologies,"
Said the gamey black-maned wild boar
Plowing with his snout on Mal Paso Mountain.

THE BLOODY SIRE

It is not bad. Let them play.
Let the guns bark and the bombing-plane
Speak his prodigious blasphemies.
It is not bad, it is high time,
Stark violence is still the sire of all the world's values.

What but the wolf's tooth chiseled so fine
The fleet limbs of the antelope?
What but fear winged the birds and hunger
Gemmed with such eyes the great goshawk's head?
Violence has been the sire of all the world's values.

Who would remember Helen's face
Lacking the terrible halo of spears?
Who formed Christ but Herod and Caesar,
The cruel and bloody victories of Caesar?
Violence has been the sire of all the world's values.

Never weep, let them play,
Old violence is not too old to beget new values.

Robinson Jeffers

WHAT THE OLD MAN SAID

For Lugné-Poe¹

At sixty-five said, "I fight every day.
My dear, nothing but death will stop
My uninterrupted élan in the play."
Then wrote, "When I am forced to see
What happens to our old humanity
All seems ignoble and I rage
To have been listed player on this stage."
At sixty-five his anger conquered fear:
The old man raged but he did not despair.

At sixty-seven then he laughed and said,
"My dear, how proud I am of all the haters
Who stand behind and wish that I were dead,"
Those who had tasted of his honesty,
Those usurers of mediocrity:
At sixty-seven he refused to praise
(And lost his job) their rotten little plays.
But when he told me how he shouted there
The old man laughed but he did not despair.

He said at seventy, "But we must work, my dear.
I see a certain look upon their faces.
Discouragement? Perhaps I dream it there.
The wicked times have put me back to school

¹Founder of the *Oeuvre* Theatre in Paris, which first played Ibsen in French; grand old man of the French experimental theatre.

And I shall die a sensitive young fool.
The news is doing me to death at last."
And then a note, "The evil eats me fast
You must help men not to be slaves, my dear!"
(The old man died but he did not despair.)

May Sarton

SONNET

How can he answer grief? The storm must break
At last, but winter is long, the murdering cold
May kill before the sun can free the lake;
He must speak now, and now he must be bold.
She has left him. Snow has covered up her tracks.
But words are poor, his satire has an end;
He leaves prediction to the almanacs,
Unmindful of events the stars portend.
His reason answers for the alchemy,
The waxing light—he will explain the dust
Of shadows in the snow, the budded tree;
But logic cannot hide the threatened rust.
The heart erodes, and he will not admit
That fire needs richer fuel than his wit.

Samuel French Morse

THREE POEMS

ARMISTICE AGAIN

The horses called Thunderspot and
Merrybowl are coming down the road
Drawing Jesus from the fort, upon
A cannon. Take off your hats you
Sinners and kneel onto the sacred load.

The derby on his head conceals
So well the thorns! Wonderful what
This modern science does: spun glass
For brains, guaranteed not to spurt with
Thoughts or blood. And seasons always hot

For year-round battle. And you know
That Merrybowl and Thunderspot
Once had heads and legs, but now
They are heroic barrels of muscle and
Ligament that cannot sag or rot.

Wonderful, oh beautiful, and low
Are the dreams that stoop their heads
Beneath the bowels! And nice will be
This peace, so wits can rhyme once more
About pink cheeks and bellies frolicking in beds!

NIGHT OF CATS AND FATHERS

Xanadu has boundaries above the stars;
crickets creak. Father, you beyond the panes
that gloss uncovered agonies and fears,
what are you watching stalk? Nothing, son,
each cat is still invisible elation
into the breathless dark.

Copper heels run up the stairs to God;
willow and elm, willow and tamarack flag out
to halt night's monody. Father, are their eyes
globes around their inward fires? Still, my son,
if they'll listen they'll go out like ripples
into a shore with frogs.

Even if he and the cats are in jungles with
black-furred and cinnamon flanks, where surely this
love will be clawed, speak again! Father, are
you alone or are feet behind you, over you,
into you, velvet and then unsheathed . . . ? There pulses
only beauty here, my child.

Madonna of all latches, many locks and doors,
somber is the window and we'll look no more.
Cover us deep. Too well we can hear
cats purring, and our father silencing there
his strides. They whisper together. Uncomprehending
mother, cover us far . . .

SUCH SWEET SORROW

Sore songs to sing, shrill things to hear.
Prickly is each flowering bush, prickly is
Your face with fears. Detriment receives
You at our door with treachery and kiss.

The turf's still pounding with the hopes
We led into the starting gate. Which can
Cross the judges' vision first, which must
Be started at some sweeter time again?

The mouse that crawled into your sleeve,
Your mind that clicked its heels to it.
Pepper is spread upon your bread,
Lest you forget your teeth no longer fit

Courage is a diorama with sick elks
And a man with warts excavating stars.
Or again a bricked-in vault in which
The wives of saints conceal their scars.

Across the causeway comes the van
To move our ribs and deeds away . . .
Let's leave a note to verify that once
We lived, but had no valid cause to stay

David Cornel De Jong

THE ANGEL OF THE LORD

The angel of the Lord
Who declared unto Mary
Came back in December
To see what he had said.

But what his eyes beheld
In the straw of the manger
Was the corpse of a young man
With a thorn crown on his head.

So he took Mary's hand
And said: It was my duty
To bring you glad tidings
Of the New Born One

I expected to find
All the bright pulsation
Of flesh, and I can't see
How this thing was done.

Mary went on smiling
And tucking at the manger
As women have tucked babies
Since bearing was begun.

For angels live forever.
Out of time live angels.
And mothers can see only
The child in any son.

Inez Cunningham Stark

THE QUESTIONERS

The sad sage-grey Dakota hills
That stood and watched me at my mapping-table
In spite of flies, stay with me; the great moaning
Of wind that walks that country day and night—
The years of famine and the years of blight
Are in that wind, and all the helpless anger
That men defrauded turn against themselves
Before they lift their rifles from their shelves.
And I have seen the ghosts of the Dakotahs,
Out of revenge on what white men have done,
Riding the Russian thistles through the dust-storms,
Burning the crops and cracking the earth with sun.
And I have heard the foxes on the hill
Barking a question; insects at the sill,
Drawn by my lamp, as they flung themselves at the flame,
Whirred with their wings no other name but my name.
I have stepped from farmhouse kitchens and been drowned
In the long empty of the summer nights
And seen the Northern Lights
Beam after beam shoot upward seeking me,
But I would not be found, and would not cry
Here! Here am I!
Or whisper from the ground.
For I knew I could not answer their hard questions
And better never heard and never found.
And yet I always hear and ponder the questions
Of the creatures of the country without trees,

But all the answers I know are wordy or bloody
Sick with swords or social disease,
And though my country silence answered nothing
And vigilance and patience are unsure
I have given my love to the askers of hard questions,
Since what discovers darkness is dark's cure.

E. L. Mayo

AUTUMN

By the drawn leaf, the ravaged flower,
Is sullen Autumn articulate;
A necromancer, the patterned snake
Nettles the hour.

The poplar chimes his gold,
The grass bequeaths its color to the ground,
While in the lacy leaves
The hieroglyphs of Death are found.

The bittern weaves his cry
On misty slope,
The wind is never found
In stubble field,
Its cloak is wound
About the antelope.

Orian C. De Pledge

MIDNIGHT AIR RAID

Beyond our factories, like caterpillars curled in a sham death,
Rivers signal their quicksilver treachery; and, in answer,
The guns of midnight pound from roots of earth
Bombarding with their radium mouth and prong of cancer
Eating out the lungs of countries in a bubble of bloody breath.

Sensitive fingers of searchlights pick the pockets of dark.
These are surgeon's pitiless forceps imprisoning in their grip
Anaerobic death, there, in the heart of air, lurking
To burst the harmless tissues of cities. It is an antiseptis
In this world of blood, with an unsuspecting child, the dawn,
forgotten larks.

Now sirens unleash civilian anguish. In a reflex they
Stumble from an underworld of dreams, whom abortive desire
(Pillared in moonlit limbs) makes gray.
Freedom's involuntary fighters, knowing no refuge save in fiery
Consciousness, rampant light and the resolution of day.

Night that sealed their visions, drained all thought an hour
Ago, is now their bodyguard; but real defense is an illumination,
Ally of the sun, and fills their brain with staggering power
Where sanity tremors on madness, to beat down explosion
Of wind, and the thunder's stupor, in a turbulent underground
anger.

Here artist and scientist concur to admire
A formal pattern of battle, where herring-bone squadrons

Elude the swaying bars of light, and white fire
From London's living furnace, flung up like a tilted cauldron,
Splits the atom of doom, and makes of man's march one un-
ending gyre.

J. F. Hendry

DIE LETZTEN TAGE¹

Neun Monate engster Gefangenschaft,
Dunkelheit, Bitterkeit und Not,
Neun Monate, wie eine Schwangerschaft,
Steht am Ende Geburt? Steht am Ende Tod?

Was für ein Tod! Wir können uns nicht rühren,
Nicht handeln, suchen mühsam zu verhandeln,
Es ist als ob wir Beile schon am Halse spuren,
Wenn wir auf unsfern schwarzen Halden wandeln.

Wer von den Fremden kommt in unser Land
Wo schon die Todeszellen sind errichtet,
Der legt wohl auf die Schulter uns die Hand
Mit einem Blick als wären wir schon hingerichtet.

Rudolph Leonhard

¹Written in concentration camp.

T W O P O E M S

CHORUS FOR OUR PLAY

How often have we heard
A voice speak from the sky—
And so let fall the plow,
And lifted our face,
Saying: Now, oh, surely, now,
From the One Most High
Descendeth the Shining Word,
The syllable of Grace.

Saying: Here will we bring the fair,
Even the fairest daughter,
The young lamb sweet to the fire,
And set our stones, this day. . . .
And the smoke rose straight from the pyre,—
But wind from an evil quarter,
Scattered the smoke in air,
And leveled the stones away....

And the heavens were wind and night
And silence, and no voice spoke,
The sky was empty again,
There was nothingness above,
And we were stricken men
Who had dreamed, and who awoke,
Not yet having known aright
The word—which is surely Love.

HOW THEN . . . ?

How then, immoderate and alone,
To wander in the lanes of space,
Lost to the mortal, dear, and known,
To Time's companionable face . . .
Through reaches that are iced and still
And ignorant of the names we cry,
Hearing, behind the backward hill,
The grave, nostalgic music die;
And sharing, never in that air,
The sweet breath of the mortal bough,
But stripped of sense—this pilgrim, there,
And with such memories . . . failing, now . . .
Of a green country that he crossed
In Time and Place, and somehow lost . . . ?

David Morton

RING OUT, RING IN

The great bells send forth their clamor
Into the sea of air;
Their sound ripples in the fathoms of space
As the bellman descends the stair.

The winds of time blow over the world,
And over our grief;
And the dead year whirls in the deeps of cold
Like a dead leaf.

Charles Norman

FOUR POEMS

EYELET

I wind wishes
On hard spools,
And though today
I'm cloaked a fool,
Tomorrow's thread
Will weave so well
My dress from me
No one can tell.

SEA SPROUT

This is my day to climb upon
The windswept Cornwall cliffs,
To stride the rocks and scan for gulls
Astern the sea-borne skiffs.

Cradled in sun I'll drowse, a seed
The salty wind has caught,
Blown open to creation from
A moulding pod of thought.

HIATUS

What stoned that moment at twilight
When a grey hare and I, uphill,
Were wound within rolls of silence—
Windless strings holding us still?

What tone slid into the silence
To unfold the sonorous air,
What moved me down a roan valley,
Where have you leapt to, grey hare?

TO GOD

O pity the pious
Who see you apart,
Not knowing they live as
A beat of your heart.

Ruth Stephan

T W O P O E M S

ADVICE TO A MAN

Walk through the night, translating your inner sounds
Of pain into spoken words.
Look for avid, repulsive facts.
You face a dictatorship of money,
Lust and million-masked selfishness
Perverting the deep words of Christ
To narrow talk; abused meekness for the many;
Solemn apologies for dishonest spirit—
The relentless clichés of human existence.
This makes the world of prose,
The world where poetry—maturity in youth;
Rhythmical search for justice and round expansion;
Imagination escaping from argument
To find unapparent truth in appropriate words—
Fights, starves and compromises
Within the hearts and minds of its creators.
You stand in a mass of human beings
With poems in their breasts and thoughts
Preserved against almost impossible odds,
Or slowly adulterated, killed
By the little prose-wolves in power.
It is not wise to pretend to be alone.
The poems lessen, fashioning delusions
Of continued height, sweet or insolent vigor,

And in this fancied isolation
People are curdled, soft, tight or chained—
Still part of the great human body:
Unable to leave it except in proudly thin dreams.

Man, with the forming weight, absorption,
Intricate needs of poetry in your body,
The cliques, the coteries and groups
Bring a pretentious, talkative, half-awake sleep.
The lords of prose and their camouflaged
Salespeople offer you
Beginning gilded crumbs;
Fluctuating imperceptible bribes;
Cold demands under amiable suggestions;
Assertions of freedom, uniqueness
On high floors holding innumerable trap-doors.
Their terms are veiled obedience, and skill;
Idealism murdered, then imitated;
Subtle wit, new clowning;
Sentimentality retaining truth
In small occasional portions;
Or cynicism and surface devastations.
They will give you in return
Threatened comfort, sometimes
Wealth, the guarded, spiced animations
Above intangible, dissembling death.

Ignore them, remain alive in self-respect,
Unpopular veracities,

Kindness, curiosity, defiance
Expressed on the crisscrossed roads.
You can find, shape your friends in seething obscurity—
The stumblers, plodders, men who know loads and mist.
Wander among them, like Vachel Lindsay
Peddling his poetry in youthful days
For bread, and close, unassuming identification
With the rich-gray, awkward, trammed, neighborly
Compactness of farms and small towns in Illinois.
Go singing, debating, helping, explaining, loving
On shaded ways, side-streets, troubled nooks.
The formalized, secretly unmoving critics,
Camp-followers, boot-blacks, celebrities, prose-chiefs
Of life — glimpsing you between signaled applause and lime
light—
Will call you a failure, a talent dispersed in the lowlands,
But failure can be stubborn change and building
Far removed from evanescent
Versions of success, quick compliments
And hypnotized crowds. The more slowly attained
Friendship, understanding of scattered strugglers
Is a secretly tarrying tribute sometimes detected,
Renewed in the rummage of posterity.

TO GERTRUDE STEIN

White, blandly isolated on the ground
Where slaughters, thievings, contradictions pour,
You twirl umbrellas, cryptograms of sound,
Like some old princess on a wistful tour,
Abhorring nakedness and common stress,
Ignoring uproars in the ruined yards,
And fingering an old, brocaded dress
In corners of deserted boulevards.

Your mannerisms, sensitively curled,
Involved and sighing curiosities
Implore us — in the unrelenting world
Of bedlams, plottings and monstrosities—
To leave our hatreds, make the earth again
An aproned inn where subtleties can reign.

Maxwell Bodenheim

THE POET AND PEDANT SYMPOSIUM

SCHOLARS and writers are under fire these days, and the barrages are being laid down not by hostile philistines, but by members of their own profession. Archibald MacLeish's attack on them in *The Irresponsibles* called forth, on the whole, more agreement and confession of fault from university men than dissent. And now in the autumn issues of *Kenyon Review* and *The Southern Review*, in a joint symposium, ten professors and literary men take part in a full-dress discussion of the failure of scholarship today.

The symposium grew out of an article by Allen Tate in *The Princeton Alumni Weekly* for March 8th, in which Mr. Tate, who holds the position of Resident Fellow in Creative Writing at Princeton, described his methods of teaching students to "read as writers." Instructors, he said, cannot teach students to write, but they can, by developing them as readers who see the creative problem in poetry and fiction, prepare them to teach themselves. On the other hand, he said, "the official academic point of view . . . that all the literature has been written, and is now a branch of history" has only a deadening effect on the imaginations of creative students.

Many of the writers in the symposium point out in addition that courses in literature have not succeeded in teaching students to read. This observation is documented by Wright Thomas (Wisconsin) writing in *The Southern Review*. He recounts the adventures of a faked and poetically awful Shakespearean sonnet prepared by him as a test for his class. Unwarned students, year after year, have praised the monstrosity, three for every one who thought little of it as a poem. Mr. Thomas' statistics are

not the whole of his article, but they are startling. Among the most startling are those that show that graduate students in the course revealed distinctly less taste and understanding than the undergraduates. When 55 per cent of the undergraduates approved a sentimental poem, "There was rapture of spring in the morning," by the Rev. G. A. S. Kennedy, whose pen-name was "Woodbine Willie," it was bad enough; but 85 per cent of the graduates praised it highly. Mr. Thomas' explanation is that graduate students rely on "placing" a given poem by "characteristics" and then produce the expected response (here the poem contained the word "lad," and many of them attributed it to Housman); and furthermore they have acquired an easy flow of verbiage as a substitute for critical thought.

"They can quote the opinions of Tillyard on Milton, yet they are unable to give a rational personal opinion of Cummings or MacLeish," writes "Hade Saunders" (pseudonym of a graduate student in a Middle Western university). Graduate students, he says, do not generally have the creative intelligence to teach what is, or should be, "the most vital and contemporary subject on the curriculum," and they are further unfitted to do so by the Ph. D. training "which plays into the hands of the memorizers, and removes English . . . from its cultural and creative center."

The blame for this state of affairs among the students in departments of English lies with the faculty, according to the professors writing in the symposium. The scholars, they say, have failed to develop a critical ability in their students because they have failed to be concerned with criticism. They have gone in for historical studies and have shied away from reading literature as literature. They have emphasized the factual rather than the qualitative.

"Two things are typical of the average English department," says Cleanth Brooks, Jr. (Louisiana State), "a cheerful sacrifice of imagination to objectivity and a fond over-confidence in the virtues of method"—faults which, at their worst, result in mere exercises in "manhole-cover counting." "Meanwhile," says Arthur Mizener (Wells College) "the serious evaluation of literature is carried on outside our universities by talented amateurs who are, as no one is more acutely aware than they, without adequate learning."

The historical method and other "current modes of literary study that contravene literature itself," are criticized by Joe Horrell (North Carolina). More and more attention, he says, is being given to obscure items of cultural history such as minor writings, diaries, and source material, and the result is that students lose the ability to make distinctions on the basis of quality. The ideal of "completeness," necessitated by the historical view, makes for an actual incompleteness in the study of any single piece of literature. Anthologies and study outlines are common devices introduced to allow time for reading a large mass of secondary material. Similarly, there is no time in graduate work for the reading of great works of other literatures. With all this, Mr. Horrell says, "there hardly remains the stamina for understanding."

And what hope, one wonders, tempers the severity of these charges? Mr. Tate is the least hopeful of any solution. He writes, in *The Southern Review*, that it is the "scientism" of our civilization which is responsible for the suppression of the critical spirit. He believes that positivism has reduced the area of spiritual values to the vanishing point and has left us ripe for fascism. "This ought to be the end of literature, if literature

were logical; it is not logical but tough; and after the dark ages of our present enlightenment it will flourish again."

Others, however, see the difficulty as an overemphasis on or the mistaken application of the scientific method. The abuses resulting from the pursuit of the historical method can be corrected, writes Mr. Horrell, by the study of rhetoric, form, and language. This is the solution, i.e. to study literature as a *form of expression*, which is also proposed by Harry Levin (Harvard). But the scholars, Mr. Levin says, have also failed to acknowledge their responsibility to the present and to regard literature equally as an *interpretation of life*. "By their failure to ground literary studies in reality, hard-headed scholars have been compelled to seek concrete substance wherever they could find it—in insignificant details if nowhere else, in what Professor Whitehead calls the fallacy of misplaced concreteness." "All the lore of history is meaningless, unless it is oriented toward the value of our own lives."

Lionel Trilling (Columbia) makes a plea that literature be regarded, not as religion, politics, or science, with its value conditional on its effectiveness in offering a solution to problems, but as *contemplative experience*. By this term he is referring to "those pursuits in which the faculties, though engaged, are concerned with their own exercise chiefly" and the category includes sports as well as literature. Both call forth "a deep absorption, an intuitive appreciation of style and an almost mystical interest in technique."

Sidney Cox (Dartmouth) puts his reliance in the refreshing power of the imagination. The imaginative teaching of literature, he says, can break through mechanized thinking, and, in these times when English studies, like all other branches of

activity, must prove their usefulness, such teaching can "contribute to a more virile freedom."

This symposium is not a debate; it is an arraignment. We must suppose, however, that these professors are as aware as anyone else of what may be said in extenuation. This quarrel is not a new one. Literary men and professors have seldom seen eye to eye and probably never will. It is perhaps cause for congratulation that our scholarship is not more than twenty-five years behind our literature. While you find individual scholars here and there who are also writing literature, and more who are capable of appreciating it, the conservative function of scholarship would hardly permit it to take a place in the creative or critical vanguard.

Nor do the abuses of scholarship belong to our time alone. The counterpart of our manhole-cover-counter is the professor in Laputa who had "made the strictest computation of the general proportion there is in books between the numbers of particles, nouns, and verbs, and other parts of speech." But, Mr. Tate would say, he was guilty of "scientism" too. Quite right, he was; but literature did not die therefrom. There have always been dull and inadequate people who have fallen into the excesses permitted by the age in which they lived, and the excesses of scholasticism have been as shocking as those of "scientism." The study of form and the emphasis on evaluation, both of which are currently recommended as correctives, can become, in the hands of these inevitable dullards, mere exercises in mechanical categorizing, fully as sterile as the more common stupidities of the historical method.

This is not the place to point out the debts which we owe to the historical approach—nor would it be necessary to remind

these professors of them—but all who enjoy Chaucer as literature have to be grateful to the patient assemblers of historical and linguistic information for good texts and glossaries. And it is owing to the historical conscience of our age that we do not have to suffer from “improved” versions of Shakespeare, which centuries with more moral certainties and less sense of history thought necessary. And from the point of view of teaching literature to students, there is a certain justification in survey courses, for the average freshman is as innocent of chronology as he is of criticism.

The real charge, is of course, that the universities not only shelter the pedant, but reward him more richly than the critic, the creative writer, or the teacher. The point that there is a great gulf between the critic and the scholar has been sufficiently underlined in this symposium. The equally serious gulf between the scholar and teacher has not. The truth is that Mr. Cox’s teacher with imagination, if he was “merely” a good teacher, would have little chance of surviving the academic process of elimination. Small wonder that students are not taught to read literature when teaching is only a bread-and-butter sideline to research! If the purpose of literary studies is—or should be—to increase the appreciation of literature, then it seems that the point of attack should be the working out of teaching techniques.

Because Mr. Thomas’s article suggests such a program, it seems in the end the most positive and hopeful. He proposes a central course of study beginning in the freshman year with the examination of the processes of language and communication and proceeding through successive years into increasingly intensive training in interpretation, and finally, making the ability to do a piece of independent literary interpretation a requirement for

a Ph. D. degree. Although not much can be done to reorientate our established scholars, the adoption of such a program as this, which would begin at the other end, with the students, and which would necessarily have to be conducted by the more intelligent and sensitive (usually younger) teachers, might well result in changing the whole nature of our English studies. And there is no reason why similar training of readers should not begin in high school, or earlier.

This is the aspect of the question—the development of more genuine literates—which should interest poets and believers in poetry: all those, in short, who desire the growth of that “great audience” which poetry must have.

Margedant Peters

R E V I E W S

THE POUND PROBLEM

Cantos LII-LXXI, by Ezra Pound. New Directions, Norfolk, Conn.
Ezra Pound's ABC of Economics. New Directions.

Polite Essays, by Ezra Pound. New Directions.

Culture, by Ezra Pound. New Directions.

EZRA POUND is an exacting teacher, a superior poet, and a problem. More than any poet writing today he has something substantial to teach about technique and content; and if the great teacher is one who makes the student work hard on the material to be learned, Pound is certainly a great teacher. He is widely if somewhat incoherently learned; his patience is short, and it is hard to divorce his spluttering and conceit from the kernel of his real sincerity. He is supposed to know eleven languages, a fact he will not let anyone forget. Now that most

of his work is available in the United States, one can appraise more fully the technique and content he uses, and the nature of his thought, which certainly directly affects his work.

It is necessary before discussing his general method, which is not only the method of the *Cantos*, but also the method of the three books of prose brought out by New Directions, to point out that Pound's interests originally and to a large extent still are those of the etymologist and "lover of beautiful objects." Since beginning the *Cantos* he has become increasingly interested in affairs, in philosophy, and in economics, and to such an exciting degree that he often conveys the impression he feels he has discovered them. Perhaps the impression is unjustified, just another result of the method he cultivates, but he has done nothing to counteract it. Then, too, it is sometimes obvious that he does not know what he is talking about. Those are the times when his method cannot serve as a subterfuge.

His general method is known as the "ideogramic" method, and derives from an essay Ernest Fenollosa wrote on the Chinese written character. The Chinese ideograph depicts ideas through short-hand pictures or symbols, so that any thought conveyed in Chinese has to be visualized, or at least set forth in concrete terms. It is, in other words, a language that is supposed by its nature to be incapable of losing sight of particular reality: it cannot be abstract without reference to what is particular. Every Chinese word is a different picture. There are 40,000 of them, and not more than a dozen men in China know each one. Since the language consists merely of a series of pictures it has no need of grammar, and there are no case declensions. There are only two tenses, and a dictionary is an extreme difficulty. It is a purely "imagist" language, and a few examples

may illustrate its possibilities. The word "plunder" is an ideograph of a man chasing a man; "law suit" of two dogs; "west" of a bird flying to its nest; "capitalism" of money-as-basis policy; "communism" of together-as-production policy; "imperialism" of king-country policy; "railway station" of fire-wagon stop; "dictatorship" of single-decision pattern.

The "ideogrammic" method is based on the possibilities of what might be produced from a selected or free-associational use of images. Pound, it will be recalled, was a member of a group known as imagists. To him an image is an "intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time." It is not necessarily a picture or pattern; it may be a phrase, a quotation from some old document, or a bit of conversation, but whatever it is it must be concrete. Nowhere does Pound systematically and at length define the "ideogrammic" method. His earlier prose work has a degree of organization and clarity that has disappeared from his later prose, which has become inveterately "ideogrammic." There are three things this method cannot achieve: unity, emphasis, and coherence. Pound does not discuss one subject for any length of time: he flits away, takes up another, drops it, indulges in some personal anecdote usually about some damn bust Gaudier-Brzeska made of him, veers off into vituperation because he thinks he has been slighted, and then exclaims a series of statements to indicate he has learned lumber in his head. This is the impression one gets from his prose. Perhaps it is a wrong impression, and if one rereads his essays as one rereads the *Cantos* the reward may sometimes be just as great.

If one deliberately cultivates the "ideogrammic" method it is because one thinks that method has greater possibilities than the logical method, or because it suits one's temperament. With

Pound it seems to be both possibilities and temperament. He has written:

All knowledge is built up from a rain of factual atoms . . . The so-called "logical" method permitted the Methodist to proceed from inadequate cognizance to a specious and useless conclusion, these Methodists then took great pleasure in thinking that they had moved in a straight line instead of a crooked line between those unfortunate ends

Pound probably did not think all this out beforehand. He owes a great deal to the theories of T. E. Hulme who said, among other things, that truths don't exist before we invent them; that they respond to man's need of economy, just as beliefs to his need of faith; and especially this:

Never think in a book: here are Truth and all the capital letters; but think in a theatre and watch the audience. Here is reality, here are human animals. Listen to the words of heroism and then at the crowded husbands who applaud. All philosophies are subordinate to this. It is not a question of the unity of the world and men afterwards put into it, but of human animals, and of philosophies as an elaboration of their appetites. (*Speculations*, p. 230)

Pound is far from being as consistent and clear as Hulme. It may not be important or even desirable for a creative writer to have a systematic and consistent knowledge of logic and epistemology, and such a writer may appropriate as many ideas, however incompatible, as he needs. But when one sets out to do major work and be a literary dictator—and Pound is content chiefly in his desire to boss anybody and everybody except himself—one should show at least some consistency in thought. There is no question that Pound is brilliant. Yet he is often inconsistent in some very simple fundamentals a man of his stature should know.

When it comes to making statements about the nature of reality, of the mind, and of ultimate values, one cannot be any-

thing but fatuous unless one knows one's metaphysical grounds. The creative writer is not called upon to make definitive statements; at the most he should only suggest them, but Pound is constantly making such statements in his essays. The question is: are we to accept them seriously or take them as part of the "ideogrammic" side-show? I am inclined to think that Pound pampers himself too much with the "ideogrammic" method; that a great deal of what he says, regardless of all his pointedness in saying it, does not hold water; that he frequently has no idea what he is talking about. For instance, in *Polite Essays* we are told that "knowledge cannot be limited to a collection of definitions," and in *Culture* that "mankind's fog concerning it (Usura) comes from not defining one's terms." What is evident is that Pound has no clear or systematic idea of the nature of knowledge. But, then, not very many people have.

The "ideogrammic" method has great potentialities and great dangers. It is, one can see, the method of free-association:

Under usury no stone is cut smooth
 Peasant has no grain for his sheep herd
 Blue dun; number 2 in most rivers
 for dark days; when it is cold
 A starling's wing will give you the color
 or duck widgeon, if you take feather from under the wing
 Let the body be of blue fox fur, or a water rat's
 or grey squirrel's. Take this with a portion of mohair
 and a cock's hackle for legs.
 12th of March to 2nd of April
 Hen pheasant's feather's does for a fly.

(Canto LI)

The subject of the lines preceding this was usury; having come to rivers, dark days, and cold he is reminded of fish, and gives us a few beautiful lines on the manufacture of artificial flies for trout fishing. So long as the points of association are ap-

parent it is possible to follow him, but most of his shiftings are abrupt, and frequently they occur in any number of the eleven languages he is said to know. The "ideogramic" method, if used properly, can be very successful, as in *The Waste Land* or *Ash Wednesday*, where Eliot's integrated and synthesizing imagination holds every pattern together. If one goes into the matter of why some cantos are more successful than others (*Cantos I, XIII, XIV, XV, XXXVI*, last half of *XL, XLV, XLVII, XLIX, LI, LXV* are the best so far published) one will see that the more successful cantos have some single quality, a form of "synthesis," or consecutiveness in narrative, description, or in theme. A mere chronological canto is often dull, as are the first ten cantos in his latest volume (LII-LXXI) which lists, in chronology, a soporific amount of dates, names, and incidents in Chinese and Japanese history from 2837 B. C. up to the 18th century. These are dull because Pound has, for the moment, forgotten that the "ideogramic" method is not meant to depict history as chronology but as a process, as a series of waves, not in the shape of rolling breakers, but in the form of the overwhelming drops of particularity that make up these waves. There is no end of particularity in these cantos on the Orient, but listed in chronological order they lose the effect of *montage*, even of rhythmical wholeness, that the "ideogramic" method, when properly employed, can achieve. Some are deadly dull:

To accuse a writer of not knowing how to use a method he himself has evolved is an impertinence. What one had better say is that Pound does not seem to know his own mind, for certainly Eliot and MacLeish, who may be said to know their own minds more coherently, have used the "ideogrammic" method with greater success. The trouble with Pound is that he has swallowed more than he is able to digest. For example, he tells us in his essays that Scotus Erigena, who taught that reason is prior to faith, is a much greater Scholastic than St. Thomas. Many men will agree with him on this because they agree that right reason is prior to faith and authority. They will agree, and they will not forget what Scotus Erigena taught, what his teachings imply: that reason is its own excuse for being because it could not be rational unless it were right. Does Pound? He does not; he despises Kant, who not only fully explored and expanded much of Erigena's thought but greatly influenced Hulme. Why does he despise Kant? We do not know: Pound is an authority unto himself and does not have to explain; he just drags in a Chinese character and shifts to another subject. He has a right to do this, but why did he praise Erigena in the first place for his "right reason"? The whole thing is very annoying when in the *ABC of Economics*, a subject of the greatest importance deserving of scientific, rational treatment, he forgets Erigena and announces "I fall back on faith." Faith in what? Why, nothing less than that 19th century jack-of-all-trades, "man's instincts"! "Economics as a science," he warns us, "has no messianic call to alter man's instincts." On this particular point one does not have to refer to Erigena: any biologist, psychologist, or sociologist who is up to date will say that together with much of Darwin and all of Lamarck the concept

of "human instincts" has been exploded as far as science is concerned. Anyway, just what does Pound mean by "human instincts"? Is he making a reservation for his own vested interests? All this is not as painful as when he announces that Western thought ends with Leibniz (d. 1716), who was the last philosopher "to get hold of something." Leibniz, if I recall, wrote that "nothing can be more important than the art of formal reasoning according to true logic."

The "ideogrammic" method itself does not supply Pound with his original material, with his images. He uses "facts," but since he does not believe in the Coleridgian synthesizing imagination, he revives these "facts" by the sheer power of language and the counterpoint of other "facts." I use the word "facts" with reservations; but the point I wish to make is that Pound thinks he is direct, scientific:

Paul de Kruif's heroes . . . gather their evidence, heap up their facts, often heteroclitic, and their contemporaries in any humane exercise of intellectual honesty are required to pursue analogous labors. The ideogrammic method, *etc.* . . .

The scientist today heaps together his facts, and has to find organizations to fit them.

Actually scientists do not heap their facts together irresponsibly and then find organizations to fit them. They, too, are guided by their imaginations. Scientific knowledge is knowledge of sense-data according to general rules relating to the succession of sense elements, and while these general rules are not conceived through the sense-data *per se*, they are nevertheless meaningless unless they fit into the sense-data or derive validity from the sense-data. Furthermore, sense-data are not the images a poet uses as his material. Such images are constructed in the imagi-

nation. Even a Chinese ideograph is constructed in a Chinese imagination. Pound has no chance of learning this if he insists that all Occidental thought ends with Leibniz.

If Pound seeks support from the methods of science, seeks to be factual and accurate in his language, then one way of judging his ideographs is the common criterion of judging facts: are they accurate? While it may be true that much historical fact never existed outside the heads of historians, we nevertheless have documents, and a way of checking up on facts by referring to the evidence. If this were not so it would be impossible for law to function. As to the complete accuracy of the *Cantos*, that is a task beyond my abilities and time. One obstacle is that Pound does not list his sources. But for one instance let us look into his attribution of anti-Semitism to Benjamin Franklin in *Canto LII*:

Remarked Ben. better keep out the Jews
or yr/ grand children will curse you
jews, real jews, chazims, and neschek
also super-neschek or the international racket . . .

.
governments full of their gunswine, bankbuzzards, poppinjays

I do not know where he secured the information, but there has been in circulation lately a four-page blue folder containing what purports to be a quotation from Franklin. Neither the printer's name nor the date is given, and the first page states that the original manuscript is in the Franklin Institute. There is no such original in the Franklin Institute, and the speech has been represented at times as derived from the journal of Charles Pinckney of South Carolina, a member of the Constitutional Convention. He kept no journal. Charles Warren's day-by-day

history of the Convention has no hint of anything of the sort. Franklin himself is on record as a donor of money for the Philadelphia Jewish synagogue. These are facts. I venture to say they are accurate. Pound, a man who has said "race prejudice is a red herring," should have checked up on his sources, whatever they were.¹

II

Since Pound insists that a knowledge of the Social Credit theories of Major Douglas is essential for any writer today it might be well to look into the economic aspects of his thought, for the idea of Social Credit, the theme of usura, of the nature of money, of the infamy of taxation, and the shadows of bank-buzzards recur as leitmotifs throughout the *Cantos*:

War scares interrupt commerce. Money was now made of brass
and profit on arms went to the government
wine taxed high, settlers licensed.
Lou-chi brought back the grafters (Ahama's)
and boosted the tea tax
Tchin-kin disgusted by the size of the tax receipts
and L Sieuen staved off a war with Japan.

(*Canto LVI*)

Pound's economic ideas are very general, and being very general, they sound fine. His feelings on the subject are best

¹Pound's publishers, Messrs. Faber of London, having taken the matter up with Pound, received this reply, "Can yr/ correspondent inform me of the dates and amount of Franklin's advances to the synagogue, and what rate of interest or other recompense, printing jobs, commissions on printing jobs or whatever Benjamin succeeded in exacting from that body?"

Evidently Pound thinks that if Franklin had not been an anti-Semite he must have been a grafter if he really assisted the Jews of Philadelphia. As to the real question, on what he based his attribution of anti-Semitism to Franklin, he is silent and evasive.

expressed in an essay on Mang Tze (*The Criterion*, July 1938):

The "Christian virtues" are THERE in the emperors who had responsibility in their hearts and willed the good of the people, who saw that starvation can gnaw through more than the body and eat into the spirit, who saw, above all, that in so far as governing the people went, it begins with a livelihood, and that all talk of morals before that livelihood is attained, is sheer bunkum and rotten hypocrisy.

What Pound is specifically against is the control of money by the bankers who charge discount rates and rent money (capital) for producers and labor to use, though labor really produces the capital in the first place and increases it in the second place; and against the bookkeeping methods of the capitalists and producers who, using depreciation of the instruments of production as an excuse, charge more for the goods than they cost to manufacture. I do not see how one can quarrel with this, and on the matter of diagnosis the *ABC of Economics* is sound. It does very good service in bringing home the little-stressed fact that the Bank of England (to say nothing of the notorious Banque de France) is privately owned; that a few wealthy families are able to dictate the fiscal policies of the so-called European democracies. Unfortunately, the *ABC of Economics*, being partly written in the "ideogramic" method, is not a clear, correlated, or complete exposition of the subject, though it pretends to be.

To offset the situation that exists in our economic structure, Pound would, like Major Douglas, have the government issue to the workers certificates for what work they have done. Such a solution sounds fine; the only trouble with it is that like most currency-tinkering schemes that have no sense of politics or actuality, it is fantastic so long as land is privately owned and the instruments of production are held by monopolies. For

instance, the Social Credit theories have been tried in Alberta and there they cracked up. In the United States the AAA policy, the greatest blunder of the present Administration, was based on similar premises. By making payments for crop-curtailment the government had to pay by acreage; that was the only constitutional way. The average farmer, who owned only a few acres, did not get more than a hundred dollars or so, while the corporate farmers with their hundreds of thousands of acres received enormous sums of money from the government simply for pursuing a policy that would enable them to make more profit. With this government money they have been able to buy up what little land was still held by the small farmers.

The matter really is not so much a question of distribution, of the fiduciary system, and of the nature of money as of the natural right of all men to work for a living. Pound forgets what he said in his essay on Mang Tze and goes on in the *ABC of Economics* to say:

Let the man work four hours a day for pay, and if he still wants to work after that, let him work as any artist or poet works, let him embellish his house or garden, or stretch his legs in some form of exercise . . .

Certainly let him work four hours! But the hard fact is that there are millions of men rotting on the streets, unable to get even an hour's work, to say nothing of the land on which presumably they will have houses and gardens to embellish.

Social Credit simply cannot work in any society that exacts profit for the mere ownership of land and instruments of production. It has been tried and it did not work; in fact, instead of being a shot of adrenalin it has, as in the AAA, been a dose of strychnine. It is like the man whose wife complained that their house was so old as to be uninhabitable. So he ordered

a new roof to be built. Up went a new roof, but since the foundation had rotted away, down came the house. If one wishes to bring the capitalistic house down quickly, then by all means let us have Social Credit.

Naturally Pound is a Fascist, an aggressive and honest one. He is frank enough to realize that his whole system requires another rotten foundation, a slave class. He says: "Objections to slavery are in part ideal and sentimental. Openly avowed slavery has nevertheless gone out of fashion." Pound can say this because consistency, a matter of defining one's terms and sticking to one's definitions, is foreign to him. What he should, in all fairness have said, is that slavery means a certain class of people (slave owners) has the right and power to appropriate the productive results of others; has a right to keep these products, to deny to those who made them any opportunity to work for themselves and better their lot, any right to own the results of their labor.

III

Pound is an admirable poet, one of the best writing today. He has enabled poetry to appropriate most of the good qualities of prose: precision, directness, flexibility. He has immensely increased the content and range of verse, cutting away all the cold fat it has accumulated and focusing attention on the fundamentals of life most poets overlook: hard cash and the realities of the concrete everyday world. He has also evolved an extraordinary language that is both direct and mellow. MacLeish's *Conquistador* derives from it, as does much of Hemingway's prose. It is a language of great width and depth· of men at war, in swimming, in the caucus room, alone in the garden,

writing legal or commercial documents, diaries, reports, and reading classical poetry. Much of it is translation and quotation from such sources:

A German ambassador once told me he can't bear St. Paul
he was, he said, so hard on fornication.

Dismissed to the joy of both parties. I do not
curse the day I entered public affairs.

Now in the first year before congress
(that is before '74)

I was drying my saddlebags and four yeomen in the bar room
were talking politics: "If" says one "they can take

Mr. Hancock's wharf and Mr. Rowe's wharf

They can take my house and your barn." Rebel!

I was disgusted at their saying rebel. I wd/ meet rebellion
when British governors and generals should begin it,
that is, their rebellion against principles of the constitution

"and in the meantime build frigates"

(1808 he wrote this time as in the beginning)
in every principal sea port . . . not to fight squadrons at sea
(*Canto LXXI*)

This language has a texture which, regardless of what we think of the design, is no shoddy. It is so expert that it can even be shoddy when it wishes, when the content calls for such texture. The rhythm, too, is extraordinary. It neither trots nor stumbles over the ruts of prosody, being constructed on the sequence of the musical phrase rather than the metronome. But the musical phrase does not entirely superimpose itself. It has to come partly from the content. Anyone who reads a canto through without trying to make sense will see how the rhythm forms a pattern and acts as a lubricant, bringing to life the content, not supplanting it. Vachel Lindsay developed a similar sort of rhythm, but with this difference. His rhythm carried away the content, knocked it off its feet, and became the *raison d'être* of the whole poem. When Lindsay was successful, as in *The Congo*, it was when his rhythm was indigen-

ous to the content. Pound's rhythm, however, never sacrifices the content. It is not merely a superior *vers libre*, but the work of an extraordinary musical imagination. Indeed one feels that if the synthesizing power of the successful cantos does not come from an intellectual imagination it certainly comes from a musical imagination:

Who even dead, yet hath his mind entire!
This sound came in the dark
First must thou go the road
 to hell
And to the bower of Ceres' daughter Proserpine,
Through overhanging dark, to see Tiresias,
Eyeless that was, a shade, that is in hell
So full of knowing that the beefy men know less than he,
Ere thou come to the road's end.
 Knowledge the shade of a shade,
Yet must thou sail after knowledge
Knowing less than drugged beasts.

The small lamps drift in the bay
And the sea's claw gathers them.
Neptunus drinks after neap-tide.
Taumuz! Taumuz!!

(Canto XLVII)

J. V. Healy

SYMMETRY OF FRUSTRATION

The Cock of Heaven, by Elder Olson. The Macmillan Co.

The Cock of Heaven is "a poem in the form of a commentary" on an apocryphal text which predicts the destruction of the world in the evil of man's own inward dialectic. The same cock which Peter heard when he betrayed Christ will be signal of the hour of final catastrophe.

In Mr. Olson's story, the Magi wander through human history, lured seven times by the promise of a Messiah, and finding each

time one of the seven deadly sins. They come at last to the "hell-city," which is our own time, and they cry out the hopelessness of the human riddle. Their failure is the failure of their own nature: man is doomed from all eternity, and his very hope is his despair. He is tormented by the desire for a God who will not have him:

Too frail, Lord,
Human creature
For way so difficult.
Accept this offering
As the waste air this litany
And grant that these fragments
May no more be troubled
With influence of strange stars
Or dreams of a god's face;
But death being our lot,
Suffer death to suffice us.

History revolves in a closed circle; the recurring motif is always frustration. "What if the names change?" asks the poet. Each of the seven sins cuts through his chronology, and the seven together make his poem. We are ready at last for the consummation, and the consummation is ruin.

The tragedy, in the proper sense, lies in the dividedness of man, in a dualism which is resolved at last in mockery, in a single principle of both good and evil.

Jesus and Judas were but one,
Even the betrayer and betrayed;
And Mary and Mary were but one.

The effect of this contradiction may be the despair of any good intention or effort on this globe over which an evil sorcerer rubs his hands:

"The whole is evil; the pure absolute ill
Like a fatal jewel, like the devil in crystal.
O excellent formula!"

But Mr. Olson need not be taken as asserting the positive activity of such a presiding spirit. We may stop with the identification of good and evil; for this may be a neutralization of evil just as surely as it may be a neutralization of good, and thus a *reductio ad absurdum* of all moral theology. And remembering Mr. Olson's disappointment with the Assumption,

O fields almost earth-fair!

perhaps we may content ourselves with a purely terrestrial humanism:

—O, Earth is exceeding fair.
Go, go, be happy there.

Logically, of course, the contradictions cancel out; and if any moral was intended, that moral too is canceled. Universal irony is to art what universal doubt is to philosophy.

To call *The Cock of Heaven* a *tour de force* is not to intend disparagement. But we can be immediately sure that after the elaborate staging and preparation, Mr. Olson's audience will be a difficult one to please. And in fact Mr. Olson does offend against economy in the scope of resources which he allows himself. Surely, the "rat-toothed and sharp-eyed / Runners in sewers and cisterns," the several scenes in which we are invited to consider entrails, worms, and posthumous hair, and finally Mr. Olson's Lucifer complete in his well-stocked laboratory are devices worthy of popular and inexpensive melodrama.

The better poetry—and there is much of it—is in the more subdued passages, in skillful undertones and delicate fluencies of sound. Mr. Olson always knows what he is about; and if his first book bore evidence of dexterous though somewhat thin workmanship, this book leaves no doubt of his virtuosity. What

he has is not simply an ear for language: it is a swiftness and neatness in the manipulation of plot, a competence at really distinguished parody, and an intellectual gift for sharp aphorism.

If there is a certain tentativeness in these compliments, it is because Mr. Olson's poetry itself betrays a certain tentativeness. The poem is too obviously contrived, the artifice superimposed. There is no authentic impact; and we come away impressed less with the poem than with its rendition. Reminiscences of Baudelaire, de Gourmont, Eliot, and especially Aiken come through; and though the treatment of these influences is deft, the poem loses immediacy and pressure. It is to be hoped that Mr. Olson may now consider himself proved, and that a more direct speech may be forthcoming.

Henry Rago

THE TWO BYNNERS

Against the Cold, by Witter Bynner. Alfred A. Knopf.

I wish that Witter Bynner had written *Against the Cold* a quarter-century ago. Today it is too late to exercise much leniency toward the indifferent poems of a writer who, through the years of almost a generation, has succeeded, however irregularly, in producing a considerable quantity of notable verse. In the work of a young poet the promising pieces are always the most conspicuous; in the work of an older poet the inferior pieces inevitably attract most attention.

The present volume consists of a sequence of twenty sonnets plus some sixty other poems, most of them brief, with rhyme, and in regular meter. It contains but little to compare favorably with the earlier Bynner, with the best of *Grenstone Poems* and *A Canticle of Pan*. Nearly all the old defects recur. He is

too often trivial. There are too many poems as sterile as *Pastoral*, in which the author ruminates on the visits paid him by a butterfly and a wasp with neither lightness nor lyric grace. He is too often without taste. Time and again the pleasure one derives from an auspicious beginning is shattered by the inept phrase, the banal thought, or the unpoetic line that follows. After such a couplet as

Let science raise its wings and probe the sky
Or let religion plumb it, what care I?

coming at the conclusion of an otherwise serious and well-written sonnet, the reader may find that he too is rather indifferent.

The imitative tendency, for which much of the writer's previous work was criticized, has fortunately been diminishing; the reverberations of Whitman have ceased and those of Housman are few; but most of the present poems remind one neither of any other poet nor of Bynner himself. They fail to take on the breath and blood of life because—and I think that this has always been at the root of his unevenness—they seldom express any true emotion, any genuine reaction of the author to a definite reality. He too often succumbs to what I. A. Richards has emphasized as the most lethal of poetic tendencies, versifying on the basis of no more substantial sentiment than the desire to write a poem. When Bynner has something to say—when some object, some scene, some person has stirred him—his words assume vitality. When the encounter has stirred him deeply, his words assume beauty. Then, abandoning artifice, he manages his lines with directness and honesty, as in the lovely *After a Rain at Mokanshan* of the present volume. Intensity of feeling, under which so many poets bog down, seems to dis-

cipline and guide his taste, purging his work of most of the defects I have mentioned. *Eden Tree*, his long poem of nine years ago, attained excellence because in it he permitted free expression to the sweeping interplay of emotion and reflective sentiment that dominate so much of a poet's life.

It is natural that Bynner's love poems should always have been among his best, as well as his most psychologically acute, work. At sixteen he wrote the remarkable sonnet beginning

I loved you, loved you, with your unseen eyes
Sweet to my lips in nearnesses of night.

In *Against the Cold* he gives us only a few love poems of comparable merit, among them the delicate *Sky-change*. During later life the poet must often turn to sources other than love for inspiration. Bynner's most frequent failing, however, is in turning to sources that betray him. "Only the laughers are spared, only the worshippers of mirth," he states, apparently still unaware that wit and cleverness are for him probably the most factitious standards of all. He is a serious poet; and when he allows his serious nature free rein, when he does not shy from candid, simple emotion (the thoughts engendered by the breaking of a long winter or by the glistening of moonlight on the leaves of a vine) he still writes lyrically and movingly.

If Bynner will remember that the answer to his own question

Is it the roof that makes my house a home
Or the foundation or the walls or I?

is in the final word of those lines, then perhaps we may look forward to further volumes from him into which less chill has crept.

Louis Forster, Jr.

HAPPY LANDING

With Wings As Eagles, by William Rose Benét. Dodd, Mead.

William Rose Benét's new book of ballads has the unfortunately poetic title *With Wings As Eagles*. Had it been called something as simple and forthright as *Flying Is Fun*, the reader would have known more accurately what to expect. For the book has the zest of its subject. Reading it is as much fun as flying is to those who are air-minded. Moreover, it may make those who are not become so. And it will certainly make any land-lubber understand the fascination that led the Wrights to risk their lives in 1903 and has been leading so many other intrepid souls ever since. Together, the ballads form a vivid and comprehensive history of aviation; separately, they have that popular, and much maligned virtue, known as human interest. True stories all of them, and wonderful yarns.

Never before has Mr. Benét had a larger field in which to display his technical virtuosity, and never has he done so with more apparent ease and pleasure. His rhythms are as various as fireworks: couplets, blank verse, jingles. Obviously he has brought to his whole task the "careful work and the cheerful will" with which he credits the Dayton flyers, but also, obviously, certain of its component parts stirred him to more enthusiasm than others. Perhaps the most memorable of all the ballads is the one to Amelia Earhart. Before the poem is over we experience not only the last flight of the flyer, but the author's own faith in the power of love:

. . . over the leagues of air
Always the loved voice, strengthening, understanding.
We live forever when the voice is there . . .

Momentarily, at least, we too believe that the crack-up, wherever it happened, was nevertheless a "happy landing."

The most charming ballad in the book—and no one is more charming than Mr. Benét when he puts his mind to it—is the one called *Ten Miles High*, addressed to Professor Piccard Blériot, too, is celebrated, and Glenn Curtis, Lindbergh, Clarence Chamberlin, and "the man named Smith." Wiley Post flies again around the world, and Byrd over "the polar pack where the ice-fields interlock." Again the Mollisons fly together, and the Soviet planes go "over the top of the world." The record is thrilling for a reader of any age, and Benét sticks to the record: though the judgment falls as it must.

Marion Strobel

FIVE ANTHOLOGIES

Eternal Passion in English Poetry, edited by Edith Wharton and Robert Norton. D. Appleton-Century.

Immortal Lyrics, edited by Hudson Strode. Random House.

An Anthology for the Enjoyment of Poetry, edited by Max Eastman. Scribner's.

Behold, This Dreamer!, edited by Walter de la Mare. Knopf.

The Pocket Book of Verse, edited by M. E. Speare. Pocket Books.

The first of these anthologies can be dismissed in one line: 103 love lyrics, that everybody knows, with an appropriately colorless introduction by Edith Wharton—the cost of the book \$2.50, making the introduction \$0.83 a page. Best shot: the jacket announcement that the collection contains such "lesser-known" poets as Edmund Waller, Alice Meynell, and Michael Drayton.

Immortal Lyrics, edited by Professor Strode, is another well meant but unblushing scrap-book of almost as frayed familiars: a lot of Shakespeare (of the sonnets) and Browning, the perennial 17th century Valentines, and the modern note struck with one of the lesser poems of Housman. As printing, however, an attractive job.

Max Eastman's anthology, on the other hand, has some justifications: a fine ballad by Synge, Marianne Moore's *Critics and Connoisseurs*, Charlotte Mew's *Beside the Bed*, some good choices from Cummings and Wilfred Owen, Merrill Moore's *Just Then the Door*, and a good early poem by Fearing. The rest of the book is somewhat bare of reward, composed as it is of poems already over-anthologized and many that do not merit their company. The Eastman book shows what one might call flashes of perception, an occasionally fine taste. Unfortunately, there are too many flashes of the opposite: many worthless poems colored by Eastman's generous interest. As with *Immortal Lyrics*, one feels that the collection is aimed for the classroom. The 8-page introduction avoids dullness (and importance) with professional ease and skill.

Behold, This Dreamer!, however, is an impressive labor: an encyclopedia of prose and verse, from all lands and times, devoted to the half-world of sleep—the domain of art, the dream, and the unconscious. About half of the 700 pages are given to verse, much of it modern. The prose contents include fantasists, psychoanalysts, and philosophers: Elizabethans on hallucinations; excerpts from the writings of Bergson, Greenwood, Santayana, and Ellis. There is a 114-page introduction by de la Mare, much of it on his own dreams. Not all, of course, will share de la Mare's unwearying interest in the land of nod. It is

a huge book, and, after too many pages of it, the reader is likely to feel a definite mystical interest in ham and eggs. Such is the plenty of the book, however, one can properly only praise it. Beside it, such books as the others here mentioned are mere copy shot off to the press room. The jacket, unfortunately, is of a mauve mildew variety. One wonders how many purchasers it scared away.

The Pocket Book of Verse contains 249 poems, from Chaucer to the present. Most may be found both in Palgrave and Quiller-Couch, and the small space reserved for modern poems is devoted mainly to Elinor Wylie, Alfred Noyes, Rupert Brooke, Joyce Kilmer (*Trees*) and Amy Lowell (no Synge, Hardy, Gibson, Hopkins, Wallace Stevens, Eliot, Pound, Gogarty, Wilfred Owen; no Marianne Moore, Cummings, Kenneth Fearing). In short, another popular anthology founded on the premise that a popular anthology must have no popular appeal.

How all the quarter buyers could be startled and delighted by a good one!

Tom Boggs

N E W S N O T E S

IT is always hard to record the death of a particularly original and productive poet who has not received proper recognition during his lifetime. Such a poet was John Wheelwright, the Boston writer and architect, who was killed in an automobile accident on September 15th. Wheelwright's work was first published, if we remember rightly, in *The Hound and Horn*. He began contributing to POETRY with the Objectivist Number in 1931, and was the author of several books of poems, including the novel in sonnets, *Mirrors of Venus*, and the recent *Political Self-portrait*.

Probably the best analysis which has so far been written of Wheelwright's brilliant and tortured poetry is a review by R. P. Blackmur, published here in the August 1934 issue. We quote a few sentences:

"Mr. Wheelwright writes with a kind of constant fitfulness, requiring

of the reader an ability to receive a rapid and tightly bound succession of disparate observation. Here what is usually fragmentary, disjunct, and irreconcilable is given the impact of mass; the result is a tough, squirming, gnostic verse, modified and exhilarated by New England wit and New England eccentricity, and the unique heresy of New England Anglo-Catholicism—and the whole qualified by New England political radicalism. These . . . are matters for appreciation and nutriment, a savor to be caught and a substance to be digested. Reading, you think of Emily Dickinson, Emerson, Marianne Moore; but these are scaffolding for a subsequent monument specifically Mr. Wheelwright's own."

• • •

A postcard from Keidrych Rhys, the young Welsh poet, reports: "I've spent last three months on the S. E. coast—anti-aircraft detachment—and have found curious compensation in Army service. J. F. Hendry, G. S. Fraser, Vernon Watkins, Goronwy Rees, and Rayner Heppenstall are also soldiering with the people."

The Poetry Center of the Young Men's Hebrew Association in New York, now in its second year, announces a list of some of the thirty poets who will read from their poetry and talk informally at the Thursday night weekly programs. Among them are Allen Tate, Frederic Prokosch, Babette Deutsch, Sterling Brown, Robert Penn Warren, Countee Cullen, and Selden Rodman. Norman Macleod, director of the Center, will give a course in the writing of poetry.

The Huckleberry Mountain Artists Colony at Hendersonville, N. C., announces an award of \$15 for the best short story and one of \$10 for the best poem submitted in its prize contest which closes January 1st. Winners will be invited as guests of the Colony for one week during the next summer session.

For many years while Vachel Lindsay was touring the country, chanting his poems before audiences of college students, Rotarians, and women's clubs, his appearances were arranged by Professor A. Joseph Armstrong of the English Department of Baylor University, Waco, Texas. The association between the poet and the professor began when Armstrong invited Lindsay to appear at Waco and, to meet the expenses of the trip, secured for him a dozen additional reading engagements in Texas. It lasted from 1918 to 1924. Now in *The Baylor Bulletin*, in a special issue titled *Letters of Nicholas Vachel Lindsay*, Professor Armstrong has published a selection of the letters he received from Lindsay during that period. This correspondence provides a series of lively, warm-hearted, and personal footnotes to Lindsay's other writings. We learn that he loved small colleges, hated club women who wanted to make pets of poets; that he didn't like lecture bureaus (which he always spelled "beaureaus") because they wanted to "speculate in me like pork" and "schedule me across the country like Tagore in his night-

gown"; that his mother still thought of him as "her six year old son with long golden curls down his infant back." But more important, these letters reveal Lindsay's deep love of America, the combination of humility and high purpose with which he dedicated himself to his art.

This fall one of Lindsay's best-known poems, *The Congo*, was given its first dramatic presentation by the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union in their big show, *I Hear America Singing*, in New York. Mrs. Lindsay was a guest of honor at the performance.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

ROBINSON JEFFERS, one of the most famous American poets, lives in Carmel, Calif. His latest book is *The Selected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers*, published by Random House. He is at present working on a new long poem.

MAXWELL BODENHEIM, now living in New York, has been a regular contributor since 1914. He is the author of many books of verse and fiction, and was awarded the Oscar Blumenthal Prize in 1939.

DAVID CORNEL DE JONG, of Providence, R. I., has contributed widely to magazines. He is the author of a recent novel, *Light Sons and Dark*.

E. L. MAYO, a native of Massachusetts, was formerly editor of *The Minnesota Quarterly*. At present he is teaching in the North Dakota State College at Fargo.

MAY SARTON, of Cambridge, Mass., is a young writer of Belgian and American parentage. She is the author of a book of poems, *Inner Landscape*, and novel, *The Single Hound*. She is now on a lecture tour of colleges, which will take her "from Alabama to Wisconsin and California to Buffalo."

DAVID MORTON, the well-known American poet, is the author of *A Man of Earth*, *Spell Against Time*, and other books of poems. He is a professor of English at Amherst.

RUTH STEPHAN, who has appeared once before as a reviewer, was a member of the poetry course given last year by W. H. Auden. She lives in Chicago.

SAMUEL FRENCH MORSE is a regular contributor of poems and criticism. He is on the English faculty at Harvard.

INEZ CUNNINGHAM STARK, of Chicago, was formerly an editor of *The International Journal of Psychology*

The following four poets make their first appearance here

J. F. HENDRY is a young English poet whose work has appeared in *Life and Letters Today*, *The Listener*, *Seven*, etc., and in a recent anthology, *The New Apocalypse*.

RUDOLPH LEONHARD, one of the foremost Czech poets, is a prisoner at Le Vernet, the "camp of undesirables" near Paris. He writes "We

expect the worst. Several Nazi commissions have already been here with lists in their hands."

CHARLES NORMAN, of New York City, has contributed to leading magazines and is the author of two books of verse, *Poems* (Knopf, 1929) and *The Bright World* (Morrow, 1930). After ten years as a newspaperman, he resigned last year from the Associated Press to complete a biography of Christopher Marlowe.

ORIAN C. DE PLEDGE was born in El Dorado, Calif., and now lives in San Francisco. She has contributed poems to magazines.

Of this month's prose contributors, all but Miss Peters and Mr. Forster have appeared previously.

J. V. HEALY, now living in Cape Cottage, Maine, is well known to our readers as poet and critic. MARGEDANT PETERS, who has been a member of the POETRY staff for the past year, was formerly editor of the Wisconsin literary magazine, *The Rocking Horse*. HENRY RAGO, a Chicago poet, is teaching and studying for his doctorate at Notre Dame. LOUIS FORSTER, JR. is on the editorial staff of *The New Yorker*. MARION STROBEL, of Chicago, is the author of several books of poems and novels. TOM BOGGS, now living at Forsyth, Mo., is the editor of three anthologies, *51 Neglected Lyrics*, *Lyrics in Brief*, and *Lyric Moderns*.

BOOKS RECEIVED

ORIGINAL VERSE

Make Bright the Arrows, by Edna St Vincent Millay. Harper & Bros.
Death at Sea, by Frederic Prokosch. Harper & Bros.
Love and Need: Collected Poems 1918-1940, by Jean Starr Untermeyer. Viking Press.

Goldboat, by Belle Turnbull. Houghton Mifflin Co.
Poems and Portraits, by Christopher La Farge. Coward-McCann.
Cock on the Ridge, by Mary J. J. Winn. Harper & Bros.
Time for a Quick One, by Margaret Fishback. Harcourt, Brace & Co.
Wild Heron, by Daniel Whitehead Hickey. Harper & Bros.
My Lady Dear, Arise, by Percy MacKaye. Macmillan Co.
Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard, by Thomas Gray, with woodcuts by J. J. Lankes. Harper & Bros.

ANTHOLOGY, PROSE, AND A TRANSLATION:

An Anthology of Three Centuries of American Poetry, 1630-1930, edited by Mark Van Doren. Little Brown & Co.
The Expense of Greatness, by R. P. Blackmur. Arrow Editions, N.Y.C.
Shelley, by Newman Ivey White. Alfred A. Knopf.
A Season in Hell, by Arthur Rimbaud. Revised translation by Delmore Schwartz. New Directions, Norfolk, Conn.

[Remaining books will be listed next month.]

Kenneth Fearing's poetry has just been awarded THE GUARANTORS PRIZE

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P O E T R Y

A MAGAZINE OF VERSE

VOL. LVII

NO. IV

JANUARY 1941

CARNIVAL IN NEW ORLEANS

Five Poems

I. THE ARRIVAL OF REX

UP a flat river fringed with misty banks,
Trailing the shattered image of their ranks,
With silks aglitter like medieval queens
Comes the flotilla of the King of Beans.

The van deploys two sportive men-of-war
Home from charades held by a dusky shore
With bloody ritual, and at their sides
A courteous rover for the Empire glides.

And then majestic Folly's royal barge:
Never has keel upborne so bright a charge

Since on the Indus Alexander slept
While subjugated kings shooed flies and wept.

A dreadnaught under frivolous ribands floats,
And freighters, yachts, high-galleried riverboats,
The Hiram H., the *Texas*, and the *Dolly*
Puff in a gaudy squadron after Folly.

Above the decks and the convened parade,
Over the scepter, wig, and coarse brocade,
There loom like tripled scepters, six great guns
On the gray hulk of thirty thousand tons:

And up the heavy level flood they climb,
Passing the silted handiwork of time,
Narvaez's weedy corslet, and the bog
Where dead De Soto bivouacked in his log;

Lagoons of pirates, who for Jackson fought,
Their barbarous arms in civic perils bought;
And shaded houseboats, where in hungry eyes
The old Kentucky boatman's gusto dies.

Up, up they climb, by fragile sunlight warmed,
Where carvels crept and gilded frigates swarmed;
Up, up, where Jesuits pressed behind the slavers,
And carpet-baggers followed Yankee traders.

Up, up, until gray towers mark the place
Where bright successive empires lavished grace,
And when the world revolved, in secret sold
The green plantation for expedient gold.

Up, up, till guns salute the King of Folly!
Flags wave; crowds cheer, but with some melancholy,
For Folly's dynasty lasts but a day,
Only a day he holds official sway.

II. THE ARRIVAL OF THE ZULU KING

Above the basin in the thick air
The shrilling wings of music beat;
The black king with a painted stare
Arises from his unctuous seat.

Like vines, a dark humanity
Clammers the row of crumbling houses,
Hanging the caverns on the quai
With wreaths of bright barbaric blouses.

The Zulu King leans from the boat.
The crescent moons beneath his eyes,
And full moon on his mouth, denote
That he is sorrowful and wise;

The beads and feathers mean he's gay,
And the burnt cork on the brown skin
Means the complexion should betray,
For once, the heart's black gift for sin.

The Zulu King holds up his hands.
On his quick head and limber knees
Shines the resurgent stealth of lands
Untouched by cold corrosive seas.

Firecrackers pompously resound
From wall to wall in mimic war;
His prancing minions hope the sound
Is all that rulers languish for;

They hope to reproduce the joys
Of civilized armies crashing head on,
They hope to let him hear the noise
And taste the stench of Armageddon.

III. BOEUF GRAS

Boeuf Gras is coming! Back, stand back!
Butchers in ceremonial black,
With badges under jowls, precede him;
A ruffled Cupid feigns to lead him
Though he but stands there on his float,
Garlands festooning sides and throat.
From green rosettes his horns arise,
A sprig of laurel shades his eyes,
And fruits and shellfish, roasts and bread,
About his gilded hooves outspread
In placid homely plenitude,
Attest the buxom joys of food.

Heavy with flowers and repose,
With massive neck and slender nose,
His slow archaic gaze recaptures
Meadows with calm digestive raptures;
So let no ironies annoy him

Though stockmen usually employ him
To lead fat steers on board the boats;
For Feet must trot when Belly dotes.
His crew is reconciled to this;
The flesh hems in the spirit's bliss,
The flesh must run and pant and worry
If Bombay duck perfumes the curry.

May strangely seasoned viands ease
The diligence of his votaries!
Let truffles, okra, garlic thrive,
Let oysters from the Gulf arrive,
Let black, long-handled skillets brew
Béchemel's sorcery anew
Till sun-burnt Time himself could wish
To trade his slide-rule for the dish
On the plaid cloth. There smiles abound;
There the tall bottle going round
Hails with a classic eloquence
The Beast's sweet-flowered indolence.

IV. SIDE STREET BALLAD

There was a drunk in a barrel-house,
Febo was his name;
Drank for a week hand-running,
Eight days it was the same.

Next night he heard them saying,
"Why is your face so long?

You don't want to stand for drinks now,
You might just sing us a song."

"My home's too far to remember,
My money all is gone.
I'm heading no place to sing about,
And I better be moving on."

Then an old man in a corner
Set up the Spanish wine;
Eight times they broke the mugs out,
Till Febo had drunk nine.

Spigot-boy dragged him to the alley,
Looked his pockets through.
Somebody stole his shoes and coat,
His pants got stolen too.

At dawn was a wealthy stranger,
Came and viewed the wrong;
As to himself the stranger said,
"Febo, sing me a song."

"Friends were all out for a good time,
I never sang a thing.
Now somebody stole my shoes and clothes,
Now I ain't right to sing."

The stranger said, "Sing anyhow.
Of how your friends are gone;
Of the dark doors down the alley.
Sing of the mud you're on."

Febo raised his head and sang.
Saw no one standing there,
But dry mud growing golden grass,
With roses everywhere.

V. WEDNESDAY MORNING

Equestrian Jackson's iron arm salutes
Derelict maskers veering through the dawn;
Unmindful of the dwindled festive hoots,
Dazed in the bright debris he curvets on.

The Zulu King, bereft of retinue,
Sleeps well behind a nickelodeon;
Folly has bid his friend the mayor adieu,
And two unequal sways alike are done.

The soldier gazes on the empty air,
His human eyes a smoothly sculptured blank;
Arches and Latin shadows haunt the square,
And the great stream grinds at the fertile bank.

Boeuf Gras arises to his peaceful hay,
And whistles on the river start the day.

Howard Baker

THE PROCESS

The struggle for existence is not over,
The struggle for existence is uncut
And is continuous and nature's veiled
Precision is everywhere and Man's
Unveiled mistakes strive to ingratiate:

Yet the factories are correct; though they are not inspired, they go,
They conjure things from things, make clocks of crooked time.

And rhyme knits sense to sound, music
To meaning and music to music: this
Precision is treacherous and it deserves
Suspicion and is accused and damned
On trial (but the rhyme holds in the end).

Serene society permits these complex balances and leisure: the
Rage to spend, realize, exhaust the loadedness of all the dice.

And the nice etiquette of travel lies
Enshrined in motion for the simplest heart;
On the face, cosmetic's still supreme.

Though the face fail of its new effect,
The art was present when the impulse urged.
The power plant breeds in isolation like a rabbit the
City of anonymity; problems, though a million muscles are in-
volved,

Stay unsolved and the suspiration
Comes, reminds that silence is not still,
Begets the paranoiac and at dawn
The night goes home to the bed of day

Arising to be magnificent!
History is perpetual motion, paychecks unbroken intervals,
Interests work like symphonies, processes are inward: strong.

How long (answer!) does the icebox take
To grow too old, to haunt its humming womb?
And ghosts of automobiles go home
To Heaven from their Cemetery. Now
Lovelier the Ford and Frigidaire!
Not only in philosophies opposites kiss, yes something glues
Minute to minute, kiss to kill and human living to human dying.

Then sighing the machines cease, wait,
Are listeners at last and faces of
Existence take on naturalness, the dance
Takes on the dancers and the unnatural
Fertilization buds the debutante...
How break the rhythm? Even the wheelless dust will flower
In wheels and rings and roses, the secret process is a naught.

Yet caught in the circular frame: gold
Transformations enter from far time
And seem to be. The skin under the fur,
The brute behind the act, the god within
The man, all burst out, are dissipated.
The magic book stands; opens; is the symbol contrived from
The transformations: the book, the statue, the crystal process,
The progress! the miniature! the
Illusion! the manufactured practice
Of socialism! the mad alchemist

Of souls and food! Houdini of
The rent! Process does not aim, it is,
The aimless thing is cancerous, absolute, even unfamiliar;
Though at any moment, stress paraphernalia of the whore!

Yet more: for man the struggle is to add
The wager on the racehorse to the cost
Of the party, law's deep problem to fame:
The votes to pennies, the payable bills
To the rooms, well cleaned. Addition is all.
The mask is no matter, it is made. Even the dream is a means
For we dare not claim anything is wasted, anything left over!

Parker Tyler

MIRACLE

Ensnared within the stubborn ego of the shy
His spirit beat about its cage of reeds,
Proud unto bitterness and numb with rage.

Can you not set it free, oh gentle hand?
Oh quiet touch, can you not lift the latch?

Sometimes a smile works miracles.
No seven times marching round and round,
No silver shrilling bugle toppling walls,
But a smile only. And the cage! But where?
Gone totally—vanished into the clear air,
Flown, the wing-fraying, the wild-eyed despair!

Florence S. Edsall

T W O P O E M S

SCOTLAND FROM AMERICA, 1938

Dull sky for wall in the east, but I look past,
Knowing the neutral ocean lounges across,
And the traveling waves will totter home at last,
Lapping into the little bays of Ross.

· · · · ·

And if I greet you, you who are sad and apart,
Whom history left after courting you a while,
Will the Clyde be brighter for the warm wish of my heart,
Will the Glasgow tenements fall, will Dundee smile?
And what of the folk at Kyle?

It is seven miles from Glenuig to the railway track,
And Macdonald the boatman has lost all the vigor he had,
And his two braw youngsters won't come sailing back:
No place in the glen for a lively lad
(They were saying the wind was sad.)

If you have a handclasp for the miners of Fife,
What then? You have seen the sinister sun
Slink behind slag-heaps and cottages. What of the life
Of Tam at the corner? (Tam at the kirk!) Have done.
Not this time the English who won.

I know that the Castle Rock shines gay in the morning
(I remember): the undulant Princes Street crowds
Do not seem to have read the strange notice of warning,
Yes, written up high in the clouds
Like banners—or shrouds.

I remember I drank cottage milk in Glen Falloch
(Just like that. There was nobody asked me to pay),
But there's refuse and oil in Loch Lomond at Balloch
And there's worse things than that by the Tay:
Who will sweep it away?

.

Dull sky for eastern wall, but I look through
Eastward and onward. Are the hills now clear?
If you climb (as I did) on the Pentlands, what of the view?
—Oh, in High Street pubs they chatter over beer:
Come slow, new year.

ULYSSES' LIBRARY

Here in the cool and book-infested den,
Hid from the Irish sun by storied shelves,
They tread, seeking no truth, loving themselves.
Each waits his hour, the devils whisper "When?"
(God yawns to hear the lewd travail of men.)
The mincing mind of Best politely delves
Into dull sins of genius. Trapped by spells,
They lend an ear who scorn to borrow pen.
But circling Stephen's heart lie armored elves
Striking unfatal wounds, for love is blind
And blithely digs its populated Hells.
There Self keeps Stephen-Hamlet from his kind,
Laughs like a frightened nun at cap and bells,
And turns the shrieking mill-wheels of his mind.

David Daiches

THREE POEMS

EXEMPTION

Even though
Himself the ruthless
Breaker of hearts
Finds only his own

In fragments
Before him—even so
Would there
Were statues

And not this seed walking—

And oh definitely
If all things are clad
(With one grave exception)
In the pure white light of reason—

Let love be exempted,
Let love be the reason.

CREED

I believe in no
Deterrents

I do not believe
In any, not even

The most golden
Knight-errantry

I believe in
The reconciling

Force—
The glorious

Fountain-head
The safe delivery

In the evening of a bright
Clear day of Herod's life

At Herod's door.

DAS RHINEGOLD

In that country, in this—
It might be the Sun:
Yes it could be
Here on the range
Our strange wild
Terrible infatuation
Grows, inhabits
Feeds upon itself
Fixed at night
Upon the lake
By day upon
The Tiger's eyes

And all the heavy
Wintry, cracked
Red hands, absence
Sorrow, separation
All our Northern
Heritage serves
Only to release these slaves to this
Bevy of doves
This purple and gold barge to
This shimmer of leaves—
This Light to
Light yellow as her hair.

And to your care another
When she so young and fair
Looks out upon the evening air
Remember, the women of
The Rhine, they also might have been—
They also are so fair.

Only if what we have had of her
We might grow stalwart enough
To keep—the music in her step
The sunlight in her hair
And many's the ruthless blade
Would join me in the deed
And leave, as I have, the wish
To die in wintry air.

Grace Baer Hollowell

P O E T R Y : *A Magazine of Verse*

T H R E E P O E M S

SEA RAIN, AND SAND

Walk with the melancholy tides,
And walk alone,
Eyes grey with rain;
Smooth the articulate sand—
The graceful interminable ribs
And faint snipe track.
Imperturbable and blind
The worn cliff waits above the fog
While fingers swirl about its broken teeth
Probing for the raw nerve
That will be dying yet
For centuries.
The lean sea inverts,
Thin lipped
With the passion of ice black behind,
Cools and adjusts liquid blades
Whirring in the mind
Until acutely they perform
Their sometime function:
Sheering the old dark blood
That hangs
Like dried tentacles
From the rafters.

JOHN C. BEATTY

THE SUNS RETIRE

Pick up the sea bird, Dardanella,
Mend you the wing;
To broken rocks and the salt spray
No sorrows cling.

Booted white tunicked attendants
Bear the sun fiercely
Spitted on silver swords beyond
The vagrant sea;

Bearded Eurasians darkly hail
The rising fire,
And the West stares at its seared hands
As the suns retire.

POEM

The world is weighted, drawn, and sharp
As the hollow tip of a rattler's fang.
The scent of pine, the stench of rotting carp,
Run up the nostril, prick it with the twang
And scratch of sand poured softly on a drum
Stretched taut into an agonizing hum.

John C. Beatty

F I V E P O E M S

CAFE: RETROSPECT

"Garçon, un café à la crème
Et des croissants, s'il vous plaît."
A slow sun moves into Montparnasse
And scatters another day.

Lundi, Mardi, Mercredi,
It must be one of seven.
Let's say Samedi, and we'll be
A little nearer Heaven.

"Bonjour, monsieur!" Italian—
His name? Ah, but your hair,
It loves the fingers of the sun—
His name—but do you care?

Dimanche, Sunday, Lundi, Monday,
Hundreds of years in these.
Warmth and color and all the rest
We take from Monsieur Matisse.

Vin blanc, vin rouge—une carafe, garçon.
Where were we before that night?
Neither hiding nor seeking nor guessing nor finding—
Vin rouge—hold it up to the light.

How many people and how many sands
And how many stars above.

How many minutes in Heaven—but one,
One minute—and only one love.

But one—and the body of Time
In how many different poses.
Garçon, s'il vous plaît—a lovely white Time,
And her arms full of poppies and roses.

When I look very closely I find
That all is composed in lines.
I put them together like this
In any amount of designs.

Each pattern I make as I go
And each any number of times
But one for one moment—and when I let go
I find that I find only lines.

Darkness—ah, love, a vagabond night
Has taken from us our day
With a soft-whispered promise of stars—garçon,
L'addition, s'il vous plaît.

THE DEFENDER

He shall be nameless.
Who can give to him
The strict and tender appellation due
To one whose birth provides an ample text,
Where precedent is garment for the new.

He shall go uncompanioned.
Where is friend
To risk the narrow hazards of this place,
Repudiate the standard color chart
Whether of reputation or of race.

He shall be undeceived,
And being so,
And drenched in understanding, know the lie,
Be unconfounded by infinitives,
To see, to breathe, to feel, to live, to die.

He shall be most bereaved.
Of usual
And dear prerogative he shall have none,
The magnitude of triviality,
The ardent apathy of sun to sun.

ALERTE

Do not try to find the man
Who holds this hour
Within his hand,
Composes the dial, twists the stem,
Straightens the wrist, buckles the band,
Adjusts the sleeve, and turns his step
Through another door in another land.

But in your searching look for one
Who lingers where

The clock is wound,
Observes the hour, forgets the time,
Listens to words, hears the sound,
Closes the window, shuts the door
Of a house you know, on familiar ground.

TO EIGHT

This is the place called eight-years-old.
This is the time by the little hand.
The big hand does what it's told.

Here is trouble called two plus two.
There will be capital, capitol, soon,
And fun called what-shall-we-do.

Here is a world of a million me's,
Some you's, some him's, and some her's,
Houses, and flowers, and trees.

Here is a place called sleep-in-bed;
Here is another called wake,
And all of these words are said.

Some words are said, and some are heard,
And some other words are read.
And, anyway, what is a word?

What is a word? It isn't mine,
Or his or hers or to have.
And you come to a place called nine.

IN THIS TIME

Now, once again the cunning-bearded Jew,
Routed from secret paths of perfidy,
Beholds the mauled and lacerated world
In the perpetual springs of his treachery.

Foul and saliva-wise, reluctantly
Appointed as distinguished vertebrate,
He is, remember this, most opportune,
Most indispensable, most fortunate.

Grant him this place, the demon of mankind.
He is enduring victim of the spite,
Seed of delinquency, that must produce
Extraneous Satan to effect the blight.

And pale, repenting Christians still adore
The frightful token in the sacristy.
Observe the white Christ-body, Son of God,
Hung high aloft, displayed in agony.

Is this the ghost that comes to claim its own?
This, then, the ultimate identity?
We dredge the excesses of our love and hate
And find ourselves ordained in savagery.

Man of the crucifixion, leave the cross.
Be whole again; attend the heart's command,
And walk in the sweet meadows of the morning
Deny the thorn; show us the unpierced hand.

Katinka Loeser

NIGHT CLUB

They need no words while the music blends
Them, borne like a leaf on the fall and lift
Of rhythmic sound. But when the dance ends
Silence divides them, casts them adrift.

Awkward and tense, inarticulate,
Youth buffets a tide it cannot resist;
Drowning she clings to a cigarette,
For safety he touches the "charms" on her wrist.

Words beat like breakers within his breast,
"Charming, this blue enameled heart."
Her throat is tight, "I like this one best—
The little gold Cross—don't you think it smart?"

A saxophone whimpers, the fierce tide ebbs.
Rescued from silence—a shattering reef—
From the Word Unsaid that hammers and stabs,
Once more they float like a single leaf.

Emma Gray Trigg

THE QUEEN

The peacock looked at the queen's blue velvet
As it spread so softly down her thighs
And the jewels at her throat, he saw them too,
And he saw the proudness that was in her eyes.

The thrushes listened to the queen singing
And were abashed when she stroked her golden harp
And the water grew a film that reflected
Her and hid the ugly spines of carp.

The Ambassador walked on the grassy lawn
Near the queen surrounded by her court.
Said: All of them that looked upon
Her have brought us but a pale report.

The queen looked on the peacock in wonder,
She heard the thrushes and her harp was still.
The beard of the ambassador she stood under
Seemed like a storm cloud on a nearby hill.

DIES IRAE

Black velvet hangs on the cathedral walls.
The organ, death-struck, is wailing.
They read the office in the sanctuary stalls,
The beggars kneel at the iron paling.

The hearse must be back in town by three.
There is an hour for death, an hour for tea.
Hostlers must curry the mournful mare;
Oats do better than graveyard air
To polish her black and glossy sadness—
Than all this plush Gregorian madness.

CONQUEST OF THE MIND

How did I rise with all this armor on?
Who put this halberd in my hand?
How is it all the enemy are gone,
And I am sovereign of this land?

Here is a stretch that Caesar once disputed,
Here Horace was, his Sabine farm,
The chains of Euclid once this land computed,
What amulet had they, what charm?

The pride of an alderman may get a bloody nose,
Conqueror be sledged down like a sullen ox,
But here are colors to relight the rose,
And folk that have survived the pox.

Augustine Bowe

JOHN LANDLESS IS LANDSICK

Across five continents
My prostrate body lies
All of my capitols
Utter the same cries

Dark names of towns where fear
Prowls in the market place
Speak to the ages
Of our hearts' disgrace

Sun of melinite
At dawn I am afraid
To hear your bombshell sputter
In subterranean shade

And when the moon climbs high
On balconies of light
Our death is scented by
Its lily of dynamite

Is this my heart that sounds?
Is this my pulse that beats?
I ache in Barcelona
In Guernica's red streets

My feet touch China where
The dying children stood
In Palestine my forehead
Blushes with young blood

I ache in my old oaks
Downed by the fusillade
Depriving the dull plains
Of their paternal shade

Oh tell me in what tongue
I can sing now unwanted
Words are exhausted
And the spirit haunted

Under what minaret
In what cathedral spire
Must I inter my cymbals
My secret and desire

Death prowls the stricken land
And roars across the sky
Silent in my retreat
Of whitened bones I lie

Oh I am landsick as
The animal that must
Hatch out the ancestral sob
In its nocturnal dust.

Ivan Goll
[Translated by Clark Mills]

T W O P O E M S

RHAPSODY IN D SHARP

The fishmouthing trumpets blare
in the cracked brain.
Naked Lorelei watches by the sea
across from the L
up the seaweed stair.
Drum skin stretches
and the gut booms
in the fourth dimension of rented rooms.
Hand me this, hand me this
on a silver platter
everything reduced to its own shoes does not matter.
The mouths weld
in the deep forge of a kiss.
The terrible jelly of water, the good gold of beer, and
the white clay of milk have something, count up to ten,
see what it is, that hides behind doors, that have been
shut by the fist
which is scarred,
untrusting
rusting with its iron blood.
The idle dead,
the tidal dead
roll over,
roll over and over on the sunken bed.
Build a new cross out of the rolling moss. Nails in

hardware stores are made when the old gods aren't paid.

New kings, new faces, new places.

Take a trip

to some of the cities,

that curl on your lower lip. New gods, new names on the door with one name for three rings.

New kings with putty thrones,
and old despots with wrinkled bones.

God's children were found

wandering in a daze. Their eyes were noisy in their forehead, and their x-ray fingers were taking the cancer out of good-bye, and their other eyes
were taking the dancer out under the summer sky.

The flood breaks out of the mind, and there is a thing to say to Thor's Hammer, to the hammer's claw
that punches the spike of opinion into the skull, and draws it out when the wound is acid.

If this isn't enough for us, nothing ever will be, if the window sharp and clear, and cut in squared dark isn't enough, think of the ones with thin coats making a religion of their own in the park.

Think, and look at the scars of those too tough for thinking. Play that number again.

Make it walk from those keys, and knock out the red dreams before the siren in the throat screams.

Then go home, look out that squared window and divide all this by two,
and by God you'll know something then
that could take a drink, and kill you.

HOSPITAL

The white wheeled death goes wheeling by,
the starched nurse pushes it
before the morphine quieted eye,
the broken wife says,
Sunlight Goodbye.

Ward, BRAIN,
works when the needles are still.
The last visitor, PAIN
walks up and puts its red elbows
on the sill.

Inject, Inject in the Babbitt's flabby arm—
Drain here the thinking power,
the market's-7, and the test is plus 4,
the drugged eyes see the wasting of life
and God runs this hour.

Yes, God, I say, All of Him
goes with the hypodermic into the limb.
Yes, God, I say to sickness
and He makes little the wickedness.

The wards add up to boxed loneliness,
The hands add up to still reaching.
The mouths add up to called names.
The wounds add up to open teaching.

Go a little more, beyond the great cells of pain,
a little deeper than the housed blood
and you'll see the spirit again.
It is here stretching to the fingertips,
it is here giving a kiss of all beauty to the lips.

The flowers breathe off infinity,
the rubber wheeled chariots
roll by
and Pain hunches there with her red elbows
waiting to eel into the body
when the morphine leaves
the glazed eye.

There is tomorrow and its blind hope,
there is yesterday and its old dream
there is the wickedness going into the antiseptic soap.
There is now, and all things that seem
out of hand, out of mind, out of eye.
The morphine, the ether calls
through all the halls
for a little while, goodbye.

J. Calder Joseph

POETRY AND THE THEATRE

IN eleven plays¹ "poetic" from beginning to end, Maxwell Anderson, America's chief verse writer for the theatre, has produced very little poetry. It is not that the "poetic" is necessarily opposed to poetry. There is poetic poetry ("How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!"), just as there are poetic prose, poetic scenes, poetic happenings, poetic people. It happens that good poetry today is rarely poetic; is often, as in Corbière or Williams, anti-poetic; and shows itself at its most characteristic when it is trying to make poetry out of a kind of experience to which the poetic had previously been alien (like traffic in Whitman, economics in Pound, kidneys in Joyce). For refusing to dip from the moonshine and whippoorwill wells of the past, Rimbaud's "poetic old junk," modern poets have had to pay heavily. For the public constantly regurgitates what is new in poetry, though it will swallow any quantity of the poetic, whether it is poetry or not.

It is because he is poetic that Mr. Anderson is so popular, though this is not the reason for his failure as a dramatic poet. In fact, the best of his plays, *Winterset*, happens also to be the most poetic—with its striking river-bank setting, its hurdy-gurdy, gangsters, Molnaresque fantasy, and melodramatic suspense—and did not fail to carry off its quota of prizes and box-office receipts. Despite its textureless philosophizing about "this hard star-adventure," its lovemaking that declines into

I will take my hands
and weave them to a little house, and there
you shall keep a dream ...

¹*Eleven Verse Plays*, by Maxwell Anderson. Harcourt, Brace & Co.

and its hero's wisecracks, painfully mimicking Hamlet's fitfully bitter wit, the play has genuine inventiveness and even, here and there, a touch of illumination. Anderson's theatrical personification of Judge Thayer, who condemned Sacco and Vanzetti, as an old man, half-witted, wandering through America to argue that in spite of everything justice has been done (a sort of pharisaic Ancient Mariner), is, to me, the author's most subtle and completely realized character—far superior dramatically to his Elizabeth, and Mary of Scotland, who seem more diversified in psychological respects. The Judge's lines, too, perhaps because their speaker has a specific living theme, possess a precision and decorative integrity unusual in Anderson's theatre, dispensing with the unfortunate imagery with which the author habitually bombards the infinite.

In *Winterset* the stark anguish of the Sacco-Vanzetti case, clamorously portrayed by Anderson in *Gods of the Lightning* (1928), was poetized with a formula of salvation through death. The critics applauded the writer's "elevation" of his subject to the "level of the universal"; and doubtless the later play is the better of the two. Yet the transformation of the all-too-prosaic into the poetic was not accomplished without cost. Mr. Anderson is no seer of visions; despite his leaning towards metaphysical oratory, his sensibility is basically realistic, practical, diurnal. And in order to lift his drama off the ground, he had to contrive a "star-wagon" philosophy that dimmed the outline of events, and opened the door to ghosts, vague rhetoric, and spine-chilling vaudeville, like the bloody apparition of the murdered Shadow.

In the eleven verse plays since 1929, Mr. Anderson has learned how to let his fancy play about historical episodes, working them

into a pattern of love, nostalgia, and hope. He has moved expeditiously from Elizabethan England, through Colonial America, nineteenth-century Austria, contemporary New York and Florida. In each case, however, the historical subject has merely provided a change of scene. The joinings that lock real events solidly together into drama have not been penetrated. Though the pieces are rich in theatrical bits, no plot coils up out of them; thus the characters cannot develop heroic stature, but tend to idle about the stage seeking a reason for existence. Their speeches are footnotes (frequently quite long) to the action, rarely part of it. As *personae* they are thin and abstract, and often behave without motivation, except for declarations of desire expressed in the most general terms.

Nor has Mr. Anderson created or unearthed new types, as the realistic American theatre has succeeded in doing. His queens, noblemen, thugs, adolescents, are invariably stock figures grown familiar through the motion pictures.

Consciously or otherwise, Mr. Anderson seems more interested in arguing for his philosophy of life than in any particular happening, past or present. Each of his full-length plays turns upon a love story, essentially the same in all. A potentially perfect romance is frustrated by another need, political (the crown in *Elizabeth*, *Mary*, etc.), social (*Wingless Victory*, *Winterset*), or private (*High Tor*, *Key Largo*). While an assortment of contemporary topics are touched upon—the decay of aristocracy, race prejudice, class injustice, revolution and absolutism—the mechanism of the play is always the love affair, and the issue always a certain omnipresent danger of “dying within.” I cannot say whether Mr. Anderson favors love or some other faith as the life principle. *Elizabeth* gives up Essex

for "the crown" and is fated to become "the queen of emptiness and death"; in contrast, Washington in *Valley Forge* puts aside a love affair, but thinking of the Revolution declares, "I'd have died within if I'd surrendered"; again, Prince Rudolph in *The Masque of Kings* commits suicide rather than assume the crown because he's "learned from the little peddler's daughter how to keep faith with the little faith I have beyond time and change." Perhaps the author's point of view is summed up by King in *Key Largo*:

A man must die
for what he believes . . .
and if he won't then he'll end up believing
in nothing at all—and that's death, too.

This black alternative, which crops up regardless of time, place, or situation, is "relieved" by a sort of devil-may-care come-and-get-me facing of the end on the part of some characters, and by the sudden immortal whisper in others that "yet is my heart a cry towards something dim in distance, which is higher than I am and makes me emperor of the endless dark even in seeking."

No doubt Mr. Anderson means his message to be, ultimately, one of hope, in that people *are* ready to die for something. To me, however, it is entirely depressing, with much in it of popular science and the endless revolution of the spheres.

Since Mr. Anderson thus poetizes history, he feels no obligation to it in matters of story, characterization, or literary style. The last is especially important in considering his work in relation to poetry. Mr. Anderson's rhetoric is neither archaic nor modern. Broadway locutions mix with Shakespearean leftovers, like beans in a pudding.

Archduke John: . . . I was burdened once
with one of these royal frumps. She's back with mamma

and I've gone human with a chorus girl.
But you might have helped yourself to a sweeter portion
than you'll share with the prince, my dear.

Currents of language developed by a dozen different cultures and individual temperaments are siphoned into a single vat, until all that is heard is the gurgle of school readings. To what age or etiquette, for example, could one assign the "wit" placed in the mouth of Sir William Howe upon his learning of the Continentals' capture of British forage: "Sic transit horse-feed mundi?"

Here is neither the authentic reconstruction of the scholar, nor the high convention of formal speech, nor the living lingo of a folk, nor the singular texture of a lyric poet or contemporary wit (Cocteau, Pound, Shaw) "modernizing" the past by compelling it to utter a new tongue. It is a language, half-popular and half-bookish, fit to be declaimed from a Mardi-Gras float by costumed figures representing British Queens, the Red-coats, Puritan Fathers, Rip Van Winkle's Dutch bowlers, the Emperors of Europe, and other members of the waxworks society.

Rhetoric so lacking in inner tone is not given a special magic by being set up as verse. Nor is verse in the American theatre something new and tender, a "beginning," as Mr. Anderson has contended. Quite the opposite. It has always been here, and has commonly identified itself with the most barren academicism. The first native play professionally performed in America, *The Prince of Parthia*, by Thomas Godfrey, was a tragedy in blank verse. From this eighteenth-century take-off, imitations of Shakespeare continued without pause to reach for poetic immortality, though each was soon forced to plead with Boker's Lanziotto:

Here let me rest, till God awake us all.

American poetry outside the theatre could come to life because it was less dependent upon large audiences with a provincial demand for "great art." Whitman, of course, struck the strongest blow at the "Shakespearian rag." ". . . all the old imaginative works," said his Preface to *November Bougs*, "rest, after their kind, on long trains of presuppositions, often entirely unmentioned by themselves, yet supplying the most important bases of them."

Poetry in modern America, as elsewhere, has tended to define itself by qualities that have made the purely formal distinctions of prose and verse inapplicable. Stein's *Four Saints* is recognized as poetry in the theatre, regardless of the way the lines are printed on the page. And the speech in which the Sphinx in Cocteau's *La Machine Infernale* weaves a spell over Oedipus—

. . . curled like the sea, a column, a rose, muscled like an octopus, contrived like the setting of a dream, above all invisible, unseen and majestic as the circulation of the blood of statues, a thread that binds you with the volubility of the fantastic patterns of honey falling on honey. . . .

—can scarcely be driven from poetry on the claim of Mr. Anderson that "prose is the language of information and poetry the language of emotion."

Mr. Anderson's verse plays, though sometimes more flexible than their nineteenth-century counterparts, belong to the "classical" tradition that visited upon hundreds of towns in the pioneer West such names as Athens, Olympia, Hannibal, Waterloo, Alexandria, and other evocations of "the great." It seems certain that the fate of the imaginative theatre rests less with them than with the arduous, if at times pinched and aborted, experiments of modern poetry.

Harold Rosenberg

R E V I E W S

FEARING'S COLLECTED POEMS

Collected Poems of Kenneth Fearing. Random House.

KENNETH FEARING'S first book of poems, *Angel Arms*, appeared quietly in 1929. It was not until six years later that his second volume, *Poems*, was issued by an obscure publisher. The year, 1935, was one in which the literary politicians of the Left were solidifying what seemed at the time to be their positions, before personal quarrels and the vagaries of international power politics had done away with poems in which clenched fists, noble workers and red dawns abounded (particularly in the concluding stanzas), when Fearing still found it possible to write of "millions of voices become one voice . . . millions of hands that move as one." It had taken him over ten years to write his first two books; the last two, *Dead Reckoning* and *The Agency*, were produced with somewhat more ease, apparently, in half that time. Now all four have been collected into a single volume.

Contemporary civilization has been anything but reserved in providing its satirical writers with abundant horrors; and Fearing, who gathers up-to-the-minute horrors with all the eager thoroughness of a bibliophile cackling over pagination errors, has as much cause to be grateful to civilization's provision as have Mr. Céline, Mr. Faulkner, and Mr. Henry Miller. With more anger than hate he probes the choicest exhibits: "the daughters, living but mad," Hitler and Jack the Ripper, "dreamworld Dora and hallucination Harold," the "gutters, scrapheaps, bread-lines, jails."

The child was nursed on government bonds. Cut its teeth on a hand grenade. Grew fat on shrapnel. Bullets. Barbed wire. Chlorine gas. Laughed at the bayonet through its heart

It is a civilization of gunmen and dope addicts, madmen and the dead, "realistically" presented and remarkably like the tabloids. Fearing's horrors are rigorously prevented from assuming the tortured shapes of those neo-surrealistic hobgoblins that, popping out at us from certain poems in increasing numbers, seldom say Boo with sufficient clarity or conviction.

The world of Fearing is nothing if not metropolitan. He is as involved in, and fascinated by, metropolitan existence (with its "touch of vomit-gas in the evening air") as Frost with his New England landscape, decorated with commonplaces, and Jeffers with his prop boulders and gulls. There is no relief or escape from the city, from the "profitable smile invisible above the skyscrapers," "the loud suburban heroes," "the lunch-hour boredom," "the street that sleeps and screams" where "only desire and profit are real." The occasional references to "cool valleys," "fresh green hills," and "scented air from the fields" seem almost exotic and unreal. West of New Jersey there is scarcely any world—Butte and Detroit and "the empty barns of the west" are only names, faint in the smoke of Manhattan Island. Held by this life in a futile ambivalence that has persisted for fifteen years, Fearing's mood appears to have changed little from the "fly-specked Monday evening" of *Angel Arms* to the "champagne for supper, murder for breakfast" of the most recent poems, although the tone has become increasingly harsh. In the ticker-tape, the radio, the tabloid, the pulp magazine and the advertisement he has found an objective correlative that has never deserted him.

"The idea underlying my poetry, as well as anything I write, is that it must be exciting; otherwise it is valueless," Fearing has written. "To this end it seemed to me necessary to discard the entire bag of conventions and codes usually associated with poetry and to create instead more exacting forms which, in all cases, are based on the material being written about. Besides being exciting, I think that poetry necessarily must be understandable. Everything in this volume has been written with the intention that its meaning should disclose itself at ordinary reading tempo." Elsewhere Fearing has very conveniently supplied critics and readers with the names of those who have influenced his work: Maurice Ravel, George Grosz, Walt Whitman, and Carl Sandburg.

Far from discarding "the entire bag of conventions and codes usually associated with poetry," he has rather taken over and extended techniques of the anti-poetic common to both Whitman and Sandburg, supplementing them with more raucous tricks not unknown to the soap-boxer, the radio orator, and the sideshow barker. Principal among these are the device of repetition, esteemed also by the writer of advertising copy; and the device of listing and cataloguing. Many of his poems depend almost exclusively upon them, one of which, *X Minus X*, is representative:

Even when your friend, the radio, is still; even when her dream,
the magazine, is finished; even when his life, the ticker, is
silent; even when their destiny, the boulevard, is bare;
And after that paradise, the dance-hall, is closed; after that theatre,
the clinic, is dark,

Still there will be your desire, and hers, and his hopes and theirs,

Your laughter, their laughter,
Your curse and his curse, her reward and their reward, their dismay
and his dismay and her dismay and yours—

Even when your enemy, the collector, is dead; even when your counsellor, the salesman, is sleeping; even when your sweetheart, the movie queen, has spoken; even when your friend, the magnate, is gone.¹

Such a poem as *Jack Knuckles Falters* makes use of the newspaper-montage treatment employed by Dos Passos in the "Newsreel" sections of *U.S.A.*:

STAGGERS WHEN HE SEES ELECTRIC CHAIR

Five days after war was declared, I was hoping for
a pardon from the governor,
But evidently the government has forgotten its veterans
in their moment of need.
What brought me to the chair

WILL RUMANIAN PRINCE WED AGAIN?

Tag-ends of conversation become ironic exhibits in the first *American Rhapsody*:

¹*Collected Poems* is full of changes, some of which may be worth noting. The third line of this poem, for instance, has been rewritten since *X Minus X* appeared in *Poems*; the line originally was:

"Still there will be your desire, and her desire,
and his desire, and their desire"

Other revisions are even more interesting. A line in the *Poems* version of *No Credit* read:

"the reflection goes from the mirror; as the shadow,
of even a Communist, is gone from the wall"

It has been revised in this way:

"... as the shadow, of even a rebel, is gone from the wall"

In *Denouement* (*Poems* version), a single phrase, "Your party lives," has become "Your brothers live." Several lines from *What If Mr. Jesse*

"I killed her because she had an evil eye." "We are not thinking now of our own profits, of course." "Nothing can take back from us this night." "Let me alone, you God damn rat." "Two rickeys." "Cash."

Conclusion has sections which depend on a manner of considerable antiquity:

In the flaring parks, in the taverns, in the hushed academies, your murmur will applaud the wisdom of a thousand quacks. For theirs is the kingdom. By your sedate nod in the quiet office you will grieve with the magnate as he speaks of sacrifice. For his is the power. Your knowing glance will affirm the shrewd virtue of clown and drudge; directors' room or street-corner, the routine killer will know your candid smile; your handclasp, after the speeches at the club, will endorse the valor of loud suburban heroes. For theirs is the glory, forever and ever.

In *Denouement*, question after question is followed by:

James Should Some Day Die? catalogue the names of a number of persons, objects, and institutions the poet wished to dispense with; they appeared this way in *Poems*:

"No more breadlines. No more blackjacks. No more Roosevelts. No more Hearsts.

No more vag tanks, Winchells, True Stories, deputy sheriffs, no more scabs.

No more trueblue, patriotic, doublecross leagues. No more Ku Klux Klan. No more heart-to-heart shakedowns. No more D.A.R."

This passage, in the *Collected Poems*, has been given a considerable going-over:

"No more breadlines. No more blackjacks. And save us from the sheriffs, the G-men and the scabs.

No more heart-to-heart shakedowns. No more Ku Klux Klan. No more trueblue, patriotic, doublecross leagues."

Morphine. Veronal. Veronal. Morphine. Morphine.
Morphine. Morphine.

in a way that suggests the last lines of *Sweeney Agonistes*, scarcely, however, raising one's admiration to such a pitch. Like the now famous ending of *Dirge* ("Bong, Mr., bong, Mr., bong, Mr., bong.") it is successful in a way that so many of his repetitive lines never are, with their inescapable suggestion that the poet is merely nursing along a bad habit:

Certain that each is forever doomed and lost, and
there where he lies is forever damned, and
damned, and damned, and damned.

[Net]

Adjust to the present, and to a longer view.
To cities shining in the sky tonight, and smoking
in the dust tomorrow.

Adjust the mothers And the husbands. And the
fathers. And the wives.

[*The Doctor Will See You Now*]

SAY THE LAST WORD, YOU LONG STRAIGHT STREETS,
SAY THE LAST WORD, YOU WISE GUY, DUMB GUY, SOFT
GUY, RIGHT GUY, FALL GUY, TOUGH GUY,
SAY THE LAST WORD, YOU BLACK SKY ABOVE.

[*A Dollar's Worth of Blood, Please*]

Although his vision of life in general, once limited largely to the vision of a *New Masses* cartoon, has broadened little, it is a tribute to his very real gifts (supplemented by a temperament chary of uplift) that within such limits he has written a number of the best poems deriving from a source that is at once narrow, born of immediacy, and stifling, and one that has fathomed few poets of his sharp awareness. He is a genuine "natural," a figure rare enough at any time to be appealing. Even at the last, when his sour wit shows signs of having curdled, and when his repetitions and lists, forceful and effective in limited

amounts, become tiresome and mechanical, degenerating into a facile and overwrought shrillness, there are still more than a few poems that are exactly what their author wished them to be; they are valuable and exciting.

Weldon Kees

TOPLESS TOWERS

The Arrow at the Heel, by Raymond Holden. Holt.

Poems and Portraits, by Christopher La Farge. Coward-McCann.

It would be possible to review almost everything in these two books politely, were it not that one of them contains a true poem. Measured by that high standard, none of the other pieces will quite do.

How is one to recognize it if, above ten thousand aspiring verses, a true poem lifts itself? Only, I suppose, by putting a little distance between oneself and it, for an immediate enthusiasm is an untrustworthy gauge. When, in November, 1933, in *POETRY*, I first came upon Mr. Holden's *Storm Over Rockefeller Center*, everything about it, even the look of the narrow lines on the long page, seemed right. One was set shivering in a steely blizzard; one was stirred by indignation against a decadent time. But sensory realism and indignation are not enough to keep a poem alive; indeed nothing withers faster than political indignation.

The test of this poem is that as we come upon it again after seven years (and such years) it stands unimpaired. Whether the poet's politics have changed does not matter. There is no stucco on the poem to peel with time; there is nothing askew to buckle with shifting creeds. It has the simplicity of steel.

Weather, with neither heart nor mind,
Has wit enough to be unkind;
Unkindly saying, fiercely showing
That we, for all our magic knowing,
All our designs and computations,
Our strength and skill of hand that fashions
This upward steel that need not climb
Are heavier of heart and limb
Than metal. Blow, O briny chill,
Life is a tragic gesture still . . .

With the poetry of other ages ringing in our memories, we can return to Mr. Holden's meditation on a Fifth Avenue building and find that the pre-doomed tower of his poem can stand without unseemliness among memorably doomed ones:

Heardra syntha; Hearot eardode,
Sinc-fage sel sweartum nihtum.

[*Beowulf* II, 167-8]

Fundamenta quatit, totamque a sedibus urbem . . .
[*Aeneid* II, 611]

And burnt the topless towers of Ilium . . .
[*Dr. Faustus*]

Churches and cities (which have diseases like to men)
Must have like death that we have.
[*Duchess of Malfi*]

And now Mr. Holden again:

A dream that since men stand aloof
From elements and need a roof,
A ninety-story roof will do
More than the rafters over two;
A desperate and upward thrust
Of mad and misdirected lust
To kill the uncomfortable rage
Of living in a lifeless age.
Blow wintriness, blow rainy wind
Upon this building. It is blind . . .

In this austere company such lines do not pale into imitativeness

nor lose their dignity. When Rockefeller Center is gone, it will be fitting if this poem lives on as its memorial.

None of the other poems in the volume would survive a comparison with great poetry, though two much slighter pieces approach flawlessness. *Peony* is rain-fresh, fragrant. Only—it clutches its emotion half a minute too long. *No Miracles* escapes that fault; nothing in it is too much said, and the unobtrusive imagery ("gowns of plants," "cloaks of loam," "lace of root") seems to come straight from the subconsciousness to reinforce the mood. To the forlorn lover, nature is only something *coming between* him and the departing beloved and so it has no attraction except as it suggests her garments. Here imagery is used with a singleness of intent which is characteristic of all true poetry, but which is not, unfortunately, characteristic of this volume.

For most of the poems, in spite of their intelligence and sensitiveness, are failures. They are not remembered even overnight, because the often fine Platonic phrases are all embedded in clutter. There is the clutter of incidental remarks, chance associations, the clutter of tautology ("torn by time's tearing," "weighted under desire's weight," "beside my side") and above all the clutter of irrelevant imagery.

The cluttered imagery seems the result of an unacknowledged, listless melancholy that drifts away from a thing half said. Every analogy that the poet's wandering attention touches is stuck on the poems. One wants to scrape off the imagery like barnacles, and save beautiful philosophic fragments unencumbered. It is generally not "mixed imagery" in the worst sense of that term, but it might as well be, whenever its extraneousness kills the drive toward the center of the poem. Often a poignantly beau-

tiful image, as when the beloved one is called "thought's signal," is smothered to death as Longfellow used to smother his occasional beauties with stereotypes:

And so I part the curtains of my word
And show them you, thought's signal, life's best bird.

I think the chief cause of the clutter (if the cause be not listlessness) is too long a line and too long a stanza. Mr. Holden's pentameters are overloaded; his tetrameters, on the other hand, often carry the fresh intensity of Old English gnomic poetry. And his sonnets—almost every one of them—would have depth and power if they were pared away and made into octaves or Troilus rhymes, or even octosyllabic quatrains. Even in the worst of these pieces Mr. Holden remains a poet, but he has been content to give us, too often, only a rubble of poetry.

As for Christopher La Farge's pieces, they had mostly served their purpose before they appeared in print; they are for birthdays, Memorial Day, a University Tercentenary; there are memoranda here of painful current events. Apparently the volume was pushed into print by the publishers, to follow up a very salable verse-novel of a few years ago. But Mr. La Farge would have been wiser to save these exercises and work them into the texture of his next verse-novel. For though they serve to keep his talent flexible, they cannot stand without a narrative interest. They are clear, pictorial, varied in rhyme and meter, clever in epithet, versatile in their imitativeness—but no more than that.

Mr. La Farge imitates many poets, but his skill in imitation is best revealed in *Mercy by Night*, three stanzas with effectively interlocked rhymes, which catch the idiom of Gerard Manley Hopkins' prayers:

Now with a cloud-broom sweep, of laced pattern,
Chaser of night, brushing asunder
Dutiful stars. Make larger, generous
Moors of darkness. Oh never mercy may
Creep through such stickling, orderly
Star-sharpness winding!

This poem is by far the best thing in the book, and it reveals at the same time Mr. La Farge's talent and his limitations. For here is all of Hopkins except—except the essential thing: the inimitable sincerity, the churning compression, the agony fighting against the ecstasy of Hopkins' prayers.

Indubitably Mr. La Farge was very earnest, very sincere, in writing these verses. But who is not earnest in these days? The earnestness of poetry is another matter, a lift into altitudes above the wastes of time; and that "upward steel" is not here.

Elizabeth Atkins

THE MIDAS TOUCH

Goldboat, by Belle Turnbull. Houghton Mifflin.

The last decade has produced several good published verse-narratives and a number of poor ones, hybrids of the experimental variety, padding out lines to make blank verse out of what should be prose. Most of these have dealt with pioneer days, the Gold Rush, the Latter Day Saints, the Oregon Trail, or some other incident of established Americana. Belle Turnbull does not depart from the pattern. She writes of gold-dredging in the Rockinghorse Range of Colorado and has as her characters a miserly mine-owner, an honest and idealistic young dredger, a loving young mountain girl, a negro cook and others. The plot, if written in prose, would be reminiscent of the pulp magazines, but an excellent poet, apparently trained on the

classics, has made it into a charming verse-novel. Her ear and memory for speech-rhythms enable her to portray a character in a few bold conversational strokes. Leafy Buffin, the mountain girl comes to life at once as she comments on the arrival of John Dorn, the dredger:

She told her pop when he swung down out of timber
The minute he straddled square-toed over the doorsill.
Said there sat God himself in a buzzwagon.
Said he was color of rusty gold, sat easy,
Sailed right up the grade and into Rockinghorse
Like the earth was his and the waters under the earth.

Whereupon her father warns her,

Mind your maidenhood. . . .
That ain't no common folks, he's company boss.
"Mind your own maidenhood, Pop," she said to him.
"He's packing a fine big hulk of a colored lady.
She'll be rolling the whites of her eyes around for someone."

And John Dorn's colored cook, Thedus, who comes bouncing along behind him in the back seat, "with a goldscale riding hard on her jellied bosom," wails when she sees a bit of gold-leaf plastered on his sweaty forehead:

"Oh you goan to turn
Under these eyes to a bellerin golden calf
Oh an I folluh you thu the wilderness,
Oh an suffuh the gallopin wind upon me
To behole the mark of the beass'"

"Oh hush up, Thedus,"
He told her gaily. "You were sired by a hardshell Baptist
Out of a jungle-cat."

The descriptive lines are serious and often beautiful. The plot progresses with correct technical detail to tell how the steam dredges failed and went down under the water, how the remote-control millionaires who owned the mines refused their operators enough money to salvage the dredges and tried to shift the ex-

pense to stockholders or even to the dredgers themselves, how spoiled Alicia, the owner's daughter, loses her man to Leafy Buffin when he resigns his job as "company boss" and decides to enter mountain life through "the horny gate."

The poetic method seems to serve the theme except in the snatches of conversation between John Dorn and his city sweetheart. These seem burlesqued, perhaps for deliberate contrast with the mountain-talk.

Jessica Nelson North

"ANGELIC PERSPECTIVES"

Planets and Angels, by Eugene Jolas. Cornell College Chapbooks, No. 14. The English Club of Cornell College, Mt. Vernon, Ia.

In the introduction to his new book, *Planets and Angels*, Eugene Jolas, better known as editor and translator than as poet, explains what he means by "Verticalism." He says, "It is time for a spiritual revolution, for a new and dynamic myth, for the vision of a celestial imagination." "Poetry is prayer," he says. "Poetry is a dream of flying." "It is Cardinal Newman's 'illative sense,' the belief in a higher reality, the belief in angelic perspectives, the belief in the existence of God and a supernatural universe of higher beings." "Poetry is another form of mysticism. It is the 'night,' as understood by the great (*sic*) visionary St. John of the Cross. The mystic phenomenon of ecstasy is the poet's means of cognition also. For the expression of this continuous law of ascension, language must be deprived of its journalistic, sociological, materialistic appendages."

These are keys. The thirty-five poems which follow illustrate the thesis. This is a special kind of poetry. It exists in

thin air and takes us thither. It is in the Crashaw, Vaughan, King realm, but airier, with less substance, less direct emotion, less body, if so vague a generalization can be allowed. Its bird flies in its own way on its own plane, on a valid track for poetry. These poems make a richer impression when sensed together than when sensed singly. There is no single poem which perfects the thesis. But they are all impressionable, and give sometimes a joyful music.

Only one person is mentioned, Scriabine, once. An angelic machinery, with a main but undefined angel named Lumor, and a counterpart, "the dancing dwarf Lumenella," operates in the poems without undue intrusion on the music. There is not the metaphysic of a Yeatsian *A Vision* behind the poems; nothing so fundamental as a Miltonic eschatology; and nothing so deep as Blake. But the poems can please by their insistence, unusual at this time, on other-worldliness. The poet flies with Lumor into planetland "And always around us this devastation of music / This music of the cherubic flight." Upward he goes into star-flash "Over the white hills of ether." "The enigma of the dream is being solved / In the glitter-flight of miraculous comprehensions."

Jolas is ingenious with compounds and new words. Let the scholar appraise these at his leisure. The critic may exercise upon "We midnight-blue into sleep"; or on phrases like "glimmer-glasting," "a smargd-herb-brush in windclang," "He flout-lashes the larval beings"; or weigh terms like "floom," "shiller-ing," or "flish" (exploited as "flishflash"), and Joyceisms such as "beachfoamwarm" or "timenaughtwinging." There is sleep 'in a hut of glass / It is the deepnight of sapphire-song.' In this fabulous realm "Angels hand us gleamcups."

So there are beautiful images, planes, and places in Jolas' aerial world. The poems seem to write themselves out of a natural spiritual compulsion, and each poem is short, and all contend in a specific projected medium and can give a special pleasure where you are not forced to set them against all the poetry you know. Here is something good to read in these times:

Our souls are shaken into wonder
History collapses
We go back to the sonant principle.

Richard Eberhart

FRAGMENTARY, INTENSE

Poems, by William Pillin. James A. Decker Press.

The tense architectural patterns of this first volume remain satisfied with being tense and architectural: the poet draws the city's telephone wires—"the spirals and verticals of proletarian slums"—without suggesting that they might be connected to anything so concrete as a couple of city telephone poles. Thus, while individual pieces are lucid, the final impression of the volume is one of abstractness and indirectness; of a fragmentary and occasionally hurried inspiration.

But there are no poems in the volume without color and sharpness, and *A Lamp on the Plain* possesses also totality and consistency. *Folksong* is representative of the music that even the less solid pieces possess:

Listeners in the wind whose lungs have felt
salt of the ocean and the prairie tang,
whose traveled minds, like far-flung tides,
embrace the rugged slopes and broken fields
of this tremendous land.

The poet's efforts at revolutionary verse are more declamatory and less convincing than is the explanatory tone of those frequent pieces which contradict him by bearing the plea of escape from industrialization:

Be not caught in the terrible maze
of traffic & lights & excavations
& a million books & a million songs
& dances in which only the feet whirl
& kisses in which only the lips feel
& autos & ugly clothing &
methods & fashions & attitudes.
Better to have only a pot and a basket
than be distracted by tension of numbers.

He explains himself more simply than he explains "this tremendous land."

I had so little in my childhood that my love
grew great as in proportion

The cause for his fear "of traffic & lights & excavations" is indicated:

We wanted to feel at home somewhere

This poet's virtues and defects appear to remain approximately the same as those which characterized his verse of a decade ago. He still possesses intensity without immediacy, freshness without originality, and protest without rebellion. He lends surprise to the most familiar language, yet remains imitative; he still purchases sparkle at the price of relevance, and leaves a final impression of evasiveness.

Have I sung a dying song, without refrain?

he asks uneasily in the book's final line. This reviewer should judge that he has.

Nelson Algren

A NINETEENTH-CENTURY IMAGIST

The Poetry of Dorothy Wordsworth, edited from the *Journals* by Hyman Eigerman. Columbia University Press.

In *The Second Common Reader* Virginia Woolf says of Dorothy Wordsworth: "One feels the suggestive power which is the gift of the poet rather than of the naturalist." Mr. Eigerman gives convincing verification to this statement. The "poetry" of Dorothy Wordsworth is at once so clear and accurate in its imagery, so void of devices and didacticism, that in some ways she is more readable today than her famous brother. She has no conflict or thesis to expound. Her conception of nature, though often anthropomorphic, is never pantheistic.

Between her feelings and the pen nothing has been added or subtracted. This extreme naïveté makes her random observations startlingly alive:

He had no hat on,
And only had a grey plaid wrapped about him.
It is nothing to describe,
But on a bare moor,
Along with his sheep,
Standing as he did
In utter quietness
And silence....

A straightforward use of the English language, an absence of all self-consciousness or elaboration, make the reading of these prose-poetry selections a satisfying if somewhat rarified experience. Every word is aimed squarely at the object and every figure is inseparable from the image. The rustic life seldom becomes sentimental in her hands, because she never makes judgments. She is forever the observer, economical and precise.

But this precision is not always poetry, or even imaginative prose. Mr. Eigerman is more than a little deluded by his en-

thusiasm when he devotes an entire page to:

I saw a robin
Chasing a scarlet butterfly

Several other inclusions are equally pointless. Some of the selections, with too much prose rhythm and prose thought, are decidedly uncomfortable in their new form. On the whole, however, Mr. Eigerman has given an adequate, though sometimes uncritical, treatment of the peculiar beauty in Dorothy Wordsworth's *Journals*. She is not unique and she is not great. But she is one of the few in the large army of naturalist-poets who could occasionally see nature, not only with much devotion and much accuracy, but with equal artistry.

Marian Castleman

N E W S N O T E S

WHILE it is not true that our best poets are also novelists, it is strikingly apparent that some of our finest novelists are, or at one time were, poets. Here, for example, is a list of some of this season's outstanding prose books, all by writers who received early publication in POETRY. *The Pilgrim Hawk*, by Glenway Wescott; *In the Money*, by William Carlos Williams; *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, by Ernest Hemingway; *The Ox-Bow Incident*, by Walter Van Tilburg Clark; *The Crazy Hunter*, by Kay Boyle; *The Big Sea* (an autobiography), by Langston Hughes, *Light Sons and Dark*, by David Cornel De Jong; *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog*, by Dylan Thomas; *The Blaze of Noon*, by Rayner Heppenstall; *Trees of Heaven*, by Jesse Stuart, *Sergeant Lamb's America*, by Robert Graves.

The truth is that many young writers, perhaps the majority, begin their careers by writing poetry, and it is important that their best efforts receive encouragement. That is one of the principal reasons why this magazine is published. Appreciation or the lack of it, during those early years, is a critical matter. Moreover, the writing of poetry is a field in which the temptation to adulterate and commercialize hardly exists. It requires a concentration and discipline which invariably have good results in the writer's future work. At this time of year when so many books of all kinds are given and received, it seems appropriate to restate

one of the first articles of our credo: *To support poetry is to encourage all good writing.*

An interesting note on the Irish poets comes from Denis Devlin of the Irish Legation at Washington, one of the younger Irish poets. Mr. Devlin says that a shift is taking place in Irish poetry, which in recent years has been dominated by a group which might be called the agricultural poets. These poets, following certain phases of Yeats's work, have been interested in the sophisticated ballad, in the Irish country rather than the city, and in the assonance and lighter movement of Gaelic meters transferred into English verse. A new group of younger poets, of which Mr. Devlin himself is one—others are Samuel Beckett, Donagh McDonagh, Niall Montgomery, and Brian Coffey—is now, however, winning a hearing in the leading magazines. Their work is urban and sociological in emphasis.

We have been hearing good reports of the group of poets who meet for reading and discussion under the leadership of Lawrence Hart in San Francisco. Jeanne McGahey writes: "The purpose of the group is the discovery and development of new principles in poetry and the furthering of those already established by modern writers. This sounds rather pedantic; actually I believe this group is doing something both unusual and valid."

The Poetry Society of Georgia sends us its list of prizes offered during the coming months. Three prizes of \$25 and one of \$50, as well as a number of smaller prizes awarded only to members, will be given in monthly contests between now and April 15th. Poems submitted must not exceed one hundred lines. For a copy of the rather complex rules, apply to the Chairman of the Committee on Prize Awards, Miss Margaret M. Curtis, 20 East Gaston St., Savannah, Ga. The first contest, which is for a poem inspired by the sea, closes January 15th.

Vice Versa, P. O. Box 583, Grand Central Annex, New York City, is a new bi-monthly verse magazine edited by Harry Brown and Dunstan Thompson, two young poets who were first published in *POETRY*. The verse section of the first issue is pretty consistently dull, in spite of the presence of such luminaries as Conrad Aiken, W. H. Auden, and George Barker, but the prose section works hard to make up for it. Messrs. Thompson and Brown hit out lavishly at various eminent poets and the magazines that print them: "All, all of them, fakers, frauds, and counterfeits, all of them must be destroyed." Only "the pure in heart" will escape "destruction" and be admitted into the charmed circle. For "*Vice Versa* is edited for a few, a very few, intelligent and discerning people, and we'll thank all others to keep their distance." And so on. The editors have succeeded not only in their avowed purpose of entertaining themselves but in amusing the reader as well; however, aside from make-up and typography, the too obvious effort to imitate *New Verse* has served

them badly. It reminds us that Mr. Geoffrey Grigson had something more than a malevolent wit—he had a string of interesting new writers. And the attitude of contempt toward American poetry, while it is no doubt a becoming protective pose for Oxonian small fry, seems merely not quite bright when adopted by the Harvard genus.

Mr. James Minish sends us a statement about a "school of poetry" called "The Syllabus," with headquarters at 407½ Wilkerson Street, Frankfort, Ky., which will represent "the literary central and southeastern United States." We do not exactly understand all Mr. Minish has to say, but we gather that among the aims of the new movement are "establishing a 20th-century classical style," furthering "the unitization of language throughout the world," and "declaring an independence from all forms of government."

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

HOWARD BAKER was born in Philadelphia in 1905 but has lived most of his life in California, where he was a member of the group of poets headed by Yvor Winters at Stanford. He now holds one of the five Briggs-Copeland Instructorships created recently at Harvard to foster the simultaneous practice of writing and teaching. A selection from his poetry will be published in New Directions' "Poet of the Month Series" next spring.

J. CALDER JOSEPH, of New Rochelle, N. Y., appeared here for the first time in January 1940. A book of his poems, *Narration With a Red Piano*, was published last year.

DAVID DAICHES, a young British poet and critic, is on the faculty of the University of Chicago. He is the author of a recent book of criticism, *Poetry and the Modern World*.

PARKER TYLER, of New York City, has contributed to POETRY, *Life and Letters Today*, *Partisan Review*, etc. A book of his poems, *The Metaphor in the Jungle*, has just been published.

GRACE BAER HOLLOWELL, who has appeared often since 1927, lives in Edinburg, Texas.

EMMA GRAY TRIGG, of Richmond, Va., is the author of a recent book of poems, *After Eden*.

FLORENCE S. EDSALL has appeared three times before under her maiden name, Florence S. Small. She teaches English in a Philadelphia high school.

In addition to Mr. Baker, the following poets appear here for the first time:

KATINKA LOESER, a young Chicago writer, was educated at Mount Holyoke and the University of Chicago. After a few years of teaching, she is now studying aviation.

AUGUSTINE BOWE is a Chicago lawyer. The poems printed in this issue are his first published work in verse form.

JOHN C. BEATTY, of Portland, Ore., was born in Washington, D. C., and is now in his senior year at Princeton, where he is an editor of *The Nassau Literary Magazine*.

IVAN GOLL is a well-known Swiss poet who has lived for many years in Paris and is now living in New York. His original character John Landless (*Jean Sans Terre*) is the subject of several of his books of verse.

Of this month's prose contributors, all but Miss Castleman have appeared previously:

HAROLD ROSENBERG, the New York poet and critic, is at present an editor of the National Office of the WPA Writers' Program in Washington. WELDON KEES, of Denver, is Director of the Bibliographical Center for Research. ELIZABETH ATKINS, of the University of Minnesota faculty, is the author of *The Poet's Poet* and *Edna St. Vincent Millay and Her Times*. JESSICA NELSON NORTH, formerly associate editor of POETRY, is the author of two books of poems, *A Prayer Rug* and *The Long Leash*. RICHARD EBERHART is on the faculty of St. Mark's School. He will soon publish a new book of poetry. NELSON ALGREN, of Chicago, is a member of the *New Anvil* staff and contributes poems and stories to magazines. MARIAN CASTLEMAN is working for her Master's degree at the University of Chicago, and is on the staff of *The Library Quarterly*.

BOOKS RECEIVED

ORIGINAL VERSE:

Under One Roof, by Agnes Lee. Ralph Fletcher Seymour, Chicago.
In Plato's Garden: Poems 1928-39, by Lincoln Fitzell. Alan Swallow, Albuquerque, N. M.
Special Laughter, by Howard Nutt. James A. Decker, Prairie City, Ill.
Detour to Destiny, by Donald J. Paquette. James A. Decker.
Where Find Sanctuary, by Arthur Inman. E. P. Dutton & Co.
Any Century, by Patti Broadhurst Dial Press.

ANTHOLOGIES AND PROSE:

Five Young American Poets: George Marion O'Donnell, Randall Jarrell, John Berryman, Mary Barnard, W. R. Moses. New Directions.
American Writing. Prose and Verse. James A. Decker.
Poetry and the Modern World, by David Daiches. Univ. of Chicago Press.
Some Memories of W. B. Yeats, by John Masefield. Macmillan Co.
The Living Chaucer, by Percy V. D. Shelly. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.

[Remaining books will be listed next month.]

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P O E T R Y

A MAGAZINE OF VERSE

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T W O P O E M S

TERROR

"I Voluntari Americani Presso Eserciti Stranieri
Non Perdonò La Cittadinanza."

Il Messaggero, Roma,
Sabato, 27 Gennaio, 1940, XVIII, S. Giovanni Crisostomo

NOT picnics or pageants or the improbable
Powers of air whose tongues exclaim dominion
And gull the great man to follow his terrible
Star, suffice; not the window-box, or the bird on
The ledge, which mean so much to the invalid,
Nor the joy you leaned after, as by the tracks the grass
In the emptiness after the lighted Pullmans fled,
Suffices; nor faces which, like distraction, pass
Under the street-lights, teasing to faith or pleasure,
Suffice you, born to no adequate definition of terror.

For yours, like a puppy, is darling and inept,
Though his cold nose brush your hand while you laugh at his
clowning;
Or the kitten you sleep with, though once or twice while you
slept
It tried to suck your breath, and you dreamed of drowning,
Perjured like Clarence, sluiced from the perilous hatches;
But never of lunar wolf-waste or the arboreal
Malignancy, with the privy-breath, which watches
And humps in the dark; but only a dream after all.
At the worst, you think, with a little twinge of distress,
That contagion may nook in the comforting fur you love to
caress

Though some, unsatisfied and sick, have sought
That immittigable face, whose smile is ice,
And fired their hearts like pitch-pine, for they thought
Better flame than the damp worm-tooth of compromise
So Harry L. I knew, whose whores and gin
Had dwindled to a slick smile in the drug store
But for the absurd contraption of a plane,
Which flung on air the unformulable endeavor
While heart bled speed to lave the applauded name.
The crash was in an old cornfield; not even flame.

So some, whose passionate emptiness and tidal
Lust swayed toward the debris of Madrid,
And left New York to loll in their fierce idyll
Among the olives, where the snipers hid;
And now the North, to seek that visioned face

And polarize their iron of despair,
Who praise no beauty like the boreal grace
Which greens the dead eye under the rocket's flare.
They fight old friends, for their obsession knows
Only the immaculate itch, not human friends or foes.

They sought a secret which, perhaps, the Moor,
Hieratic, white-robed, pitiless, might teach,
Who duped and dying but for pride, therefore
Hugged truth which cause or conscience scarcely reach.
As Jacob all night with the angelic foe,
They wrestled him who did not speak, but died,
And wrestle now, by frozen fen and floe,
New Courier in fury sanctified;
And seek that face which, greasy, frost-breathed, furred,
Bends to the bomb-sight over bitter Helsingfors.

Blood splashed on the terrorless intellect creates
Corrosive fizzile like the spattered lime,
And its enseamed stew but satiates
Itself, in that lewd and faceless pantomime.
You know, by radio, how hotly the world repeats,
When the brute crowd roars or the blunt boot-heels resound
In the Piazza or the Wilhelmplatz,
The crime of Onan, spilled upon the ground;
You know, whose dear hope Alexis Carrel kept
Alive in a test-tube, where it monstrously grew, and slept.

But it is dead, and you now, guiltless, sink
To rest in lobbies, or pace gardens where

The slow god crumbles and the fountains prink,
Nor heed the criminal king, who paints the air
With discoursed madness and protruding eye,
Nor give the alarm, nor ask tonight where sleeps
That head which hooped the jewel Fidelity,
But like an old melon now, in the dank ditch, seeps;
But crack nuts, while the conscience-stricken stare
Kisses the terror; for you see an empty chair.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

*What has availed
Or failed?
The firm decision,
The voices
Lost,
And the choices
Lost,
Elision
Of choice and choice
In the long stammer of chance?
What has availed
Or failed?
Or will avail?
Hawk's poise,
The boxer's stance,
The sail
(O true upon the swollen tack!)
The sprinter's pace,*

Moonlit the bomber's bludgeoning grace—
Or looking back,
The stainèd face?

Pace forth in dawns
Of buds unhinged, and dew;
At dusk pace downns
To see the sea and view,
Immense, the casual land;
For the heart can be held in the hand
And the hour held in the hand
And the question held in the hand:
But never demand
Of the wave-lipped, sea-tongued sand
Answer,
Nor of the gull demand
Answer,
Nor of the noble sky
Where the gull in its integrity
Will move;
Nor answer
Of your true love.

For all—
Each frescoed figure leaning from the world's wall
With tongue too dry and small,
Blunt eye and ignorant hand—
Demand
In truth the true
Answer of you;
And each,

Locked lonely in its valveless speech,
Speaks,
And without resting, seeks
Answer, and seeks to speak:
Their converse is not loud.
How painful, intimate, and meek
Before your face are crag and cloud!

For all
Rehearse their own simplicity:
For all—
The wind-heaved gull,
The ocean with its blundering garrulity,
Stony pasture, starving goat,
Mullein, anemone,
Groaning gallows and the gallows-meat—
For all repeat
In mirrored-mirrored-mirror-wise
Unto our eyes
But question, not replies:
All flower from the stalk, and bend,
Like you, with what beseeching hand.

Then let the heart be stone,
And think
On stone,
And think
How once the tribes in dread
From easy-bellied Egypt fled,
And when the conniving sea was past,
Stumbling the waste

Wore led,
Not to the desert well
Or green-lipped pool
Where the moving water sang
And algae swayed beneath,
But thirsting and accurst—
Tongue black between the teeth
Whence no sweet spittle sprang—
Under the noon's flame
To the rock came:
And think how the Israelite
Struck
And the riven rock
Like a pealing bell rang
And in the general sight
Gave forth to tongue and gut the living stream's delight.

But if not that, then know
At least the heart a bow
Bent,
And the wood's tough nerve unspent,
Cord-kissing notch set now
Upon the cord
As on the tongue the word
The lover at love has heard:
And once the wide arc is sprung,
Live in the cord's long clang,
Who let the arrow fly
At God's black, orbèd, target eye.

Robert Penn Warren

T W O P O E M S

SALE

For sale: by order of the remaining heirs
Who ran up and down the big center stairs
The what-not, the settee, the Chippendale chairs
—And an attic of horrors, a closet of fears.

The furniture polished and polished so grand,
A stable and paddock, some fox-hunting land,
The summer house shaped like a village band stand
—And grandfather's sinister hovering hand.

The antimacassar for the sofa in red,
The Bechstein piano, the four-poster bed,
The library used as a card room instead
—And some watery eyes in a Copley head.

The dining room carpet dyed brighter than blood,
The table where everyone ate as he should,
The sideboard beside which a tall footman stood
—And a fume of decay that clings fast to the wood.

The hand-painted wall paper, finer than skin,
The room that the children had never been in,
All the rings and the relics encrusted with sin
—And the taint in a blood that was running too thin.

SECOND SHADOW

Cast on the field from their full height,
The oak leaves turn upon our sight.
Sun doubles them upon the land,
Their shade is wider than a hand,
The shadows move from left to right.

A hundred years, to this same sound,
The tree repeats its daily round,
The drama of revolving shade.
A hundred years its leaves are laid
In rich profusion on the ground.

But man a second shadow throws
Beyond the visible he knows:
The mind, untrammeled, can outfly
The nets of mutability
And shake the shade that hugs him close.

Theodore Roethke

T H R E E P O E M S

PRAYER FOR A. D. 1941

Do not mistake the metal hand,
The color of the eye of steel;
They freeze the minds that understand
How true the souls of men can feel.

Before the lines are drawn more tight,
Before such treason is our own,
Let us decide the longer fight
That issues in our hearts alone.

Still O God maintain us now
On the dark descent to being great!
So far we break, so far we bow,
This moment to confess and wait.

We and our brothers dissolute
Pride our race on being lost
And we will have it absolute
Whatever the ruin and the cost.

But while we shout our wish to kill
And fling our battles at the sky,
Let us not say it is Thy will
That in this common cause we die.

No claim for right has yet been heard;
We may expect no call for good;

The end is dark, the way is blurred,
The purpose is not understood.

When we have chained the metallic god
And damped again the waste of fire,
Across the miles of powdered sod
Where shall we look for our desire?

After the harvest has been burned
And we are starving for our toil,
Where shall our hungry eye be turned
On the wide dark image of our soil?

We dare not ask nor understand
What our surviving souls will feel
We grasp with power the metal hand
And front the world with eye of steel.

THE FUTURE HAS NOT ENDED

Her body taken soon still fills
Its place. As back her body shrinks,
Back to itself, thus separate,
Asleep below the iron hills,
My body lies awake and thinks
Along its arteries and nerves.
My bone and blood remember hers
For only blood and bone can mate,
The mind forgets and only serves
To keep itself inviolate.

The mind will huddle to its embers
While the body kindles new,
And what the mind forgets, remembers.

But phrases desolate and few
Are what my body hears from her,
So distant she has faded out
Beyond my human register
And what I gather disappears
To whispers in the silent years.

To deeply hear and closely hold
Up to the point where knowing stops,
So drives the current of our blood;
And then beyond that point to fling
The flying crest of our desire
Out to the mind of everything
By which our story can be told
When we are neither wave nor fire.

What we remember and forget
We want that outer mind to know.
The future has not ended yet.

THE CYCLE

And yet I see the narcissus yellowing down
Though so long nursed in the half-warmth and the dark;
That short, mechanic cycle I remark
Between brown earth and withered leaves as brown.
Of all the crowns this is the only crown

To sit secure, too brief for love, and stark,
The root, the leaf, the flower, and the bark
Crumbling daily, too common for renown.

This is how love and fame are written small
In a pot of raveled flowers—the earthly touch—
All we need know of growing and decay.
Were I unborn, I'd mind them not at all;
Were I a god, I should not mind them much;
But they are too much like the human way.

Edward A. Richards

MEMORY

Cities are walled. It is a cruel land
And private as a dream. Nothing alive
Will grow there, yet great ghostly acres thrive
On a sound, an odor: one blown pinch of sand
Erects a cape, and soon the seas arrive.
But nothing alters there. Beyond return,
Joys lost, like meteors, cross the indifferent night
And fall away. While fixed, nailed to the sight,
Sharp as midsummer stars, that blind and burn,
Most distant moments lend their chilling light
Retired as the face of one who died,
The landscape lies. The structures, being old,
Keep griefs too awkward for one life to hold;
The rooms are many-mirrored, not for pride.
Yet there delight blooms in remorseless cold.

Babette Deutsch

T W O P O E M S

TRAVELER FORGET

Traveler, you must forget these western mountains,
Lifting like wreaths above the noontide haze.
They will withstand eternity serenely—
Yours are the fleeting days.

Yours will be brief and withered as the desert's garden,
Blooming, not from abundance, but from dearth,
Transient as the garland that the cactus
Snatched from the arid earth.

Ageless, remote, the mountains will offer no solace,
Watching your courage broken and red with rust.
Forget them—and learn with the desert's difficult wisdom
To seek your flowers in the dust.

ALIEN

Where a man's roots grow deep, there should he tarry
It is not good to wrest him from the loam
That holds the rich resources of his spirit—
The place his soul calls home.

A man disturbed, he will go sick with longing
There is no comfort, though he journey far,

Save in the spot belovéd and familiar,
Beneath one punctual star.

Meagre the happiness the world will give him.
Few there will be to mark it when he goes
To lie, a stranger in a world of strangers,
Under the alien snows.

Virginia Lyne Tunstall

NOW I HAVE DIED

Now I have died, I shall return again
Untroubled, with my senses calm and clear,
My body washed of sorrow, cool as rain,
I shall return though perilous spring be here.
The house shall not appall me though it speak,
Though the white pear tree tremble at my side,
And blue-eyed myrtle stir against my cheek;
Oblivious I shall smile—now I have died.

I shall be suave as dew, candid as light,
Contented with the hour when cowslips start,
Adopt with easy span the thrush's flight
And lie in fields undarkened by the heart.
One terror lives: if I should meet a lost
And gentle child, my long forgotten ghost.

Florence Ripley Mastin

FAREWELL AND GOOD

She I loved so much will not appear again
Brilliant to my eyes as once she held me, nor
To inhuman eyes in any angel-foaming world.

What use my grief to a world bitten in self
Bland under omen, but increase its hermit, useless griefs?
Why must, as absence ages, she the more instant cling?

Grief cannot doctor my birthday evil that diminished her,
Nor be voucher for recompense of pain at a heaven's gate,
Nor by crying it for relief do I purge it. Nothing forgets:

Not wisdom teased from the wax and crumble of all flesh
By the few, generous and unduped: O to wash in the milk of
the moon!

For the bare sweet of life in the rock-night scratched of men

Like eruptions of mineral continents scuffling to settle down;
And though Spring lust and shine on the sea and chaffinches
twaddle,

Though light from sunlight down to tombs give me my kind:

Whatever I do, stunned, I may find my hand, once hers,
Bled on the wall in a crack of anger and veins blocked
And eyes glazed that will break open to hers no more;

At any time of the day and night, struck by a wind-flash
In snood of leaves or in phantasms of sleep assembling her form,
I restore my kingdom in her, the real that deepened the
dreamed-on

Ritual loves of legend women admired in childhood:
Then remembrance stings my reason, both entangled in
Grief which webs movement and is merely want.

Still the complaint, still no comfort to her and me split
Like a glass, our life spilt by some careless hand
Our life never that could never be filled by one another.

Denis Devlin

REFUGEES

At aerial borders, the races flee like birds
and speed through woods in flowery confusions!
searching the heavens where kites of death
tumble from the hands of boys on holidays.

Through forests, where a Puck might suddenly leap
to imitate a man or boy in love's illusions
come these troops of nowhere going there
with half of each walking in the shadows.

To ferry sensual rivers and meet conclusions
coming a thousand ways hot summer mornings
and cross bright frontiers with the eyes of doubt
in a spatial lense that bars all man from men.

Harry Roskolenko

FOUR POEMS

SEA DEATH

Sea creatures when their time is filled
Surrender to enormous peace;
In silent legions dimly-willed
Unasking as they came they cease.

The crab green-weeded with his years,
The darting crystal-armored prawn,
Voiceless and small as fading stars
Languish a minute and are gone.

In shallows lovely with the sun
The sick fish, drifting on the tide
Past tweedy sand and flowery stone,
Turns slowly on his diamond side.

WINTER AFTERNOON

Long sheds of coal and lumber
Are faded black and gray
Above the river's umber
Slow mirror of the day.

Sound, like light, is lessened;
The dark gulls do not cry;

Factory fires have fastened
Calm plumes upon the sky.

The clouds puff down, the airy
Perfume of snow is guessed.
A far wharf holds a ferry,
Red as a winter west.

VICTORIAN PARLOR

Let hands be gentle when they part the curtain
Whose foliage and flowers of gold brocade
Protect this place. Here everything is certain
Forever, though stars fade.

When it is time for tea the sunset blazes
Red dew upon the crystal chandelier,
The mirror fills and flows with forest hazes:
Let hands be folded here.

Far from the world of bare and plushless noises,
The other plane of streamlines raw in brass,
Let hands learn peace where on the mantel poises
A shepherd of white glass.

GOSSIP

She always asks you, How is so-and-so?
—Her wary eyes as self-contained as beads.
She takes each anecdote and makes it grow,
Or keeps it like a farmer hoarding seeds.
Conscious of being one who never fell,
Who never laid a single brick on sand,
She sees her neighbor stumbling into hell
And points a little plump triumphant hand.
When one is middle-aged and well-to-do
And free of care, existence might be flat
If fascinating troubles did not brew
In other lives, to taste in private chat
Before the cozy fire—a cup of tea
Precarious on a wide well-toasted knee.

Elizabeth Bohm

O LOVELIEST VOICE

O loveliest voice I ever heard,
Your accent gilds the lucent word,
Your murmur jewels the silver rhyme:
But must I listen all the time?

Dorothy Dow

MURDER FOR TEA

A fence about the yard delayed the eye
but tacked its handles there for vaulting over;
elm-hand with sleight of shadow palmed the house
while curtained windows bannered to the sky.

And any man might visit like the postman
and in the parallel of evening hours
wheedle the coy ghosts whom injustice killed
and tamed to tend with wretched eyes the flowers:

for there were whiter houses down a door,
long lawns, fat terraces, and envious men
continually in hunting clothes and drinking,
who bubbled in their wills to prince the poor.

The fence was venom to their wish, they rode
with fierce belittling horses to possess
and found for fox a welcome-piping people
and left them ghosts at this precise address.

Edwin G Burrows

MARINER

By still harbor water
Where boats and their down-turned images
Lie like open shell valves
Joined at the water's surface,
And sails hang shriveled
Like old hides flayed off the wind,
With all their creases brittle
As dry leaves,—
And chains stuck link to link in rust
Dream of old plunging in the sea:

You wait, O voyagers returned,
Sitting on sea driven poles
At the wharf's edge
Like gulls
Unable to go inland;
Your thoughts still whirling about masts
And going out to meet each fishing boat
Heavy beneath its silver,
As though a leak had let
The leaping ripples of the sea
Across its floor.

The confident grip of earth set feet
Is not for you,
You who can never lose
The reeling sense of vast velocity;

Who know a step unmeasured
By a larger
Is land men's bondage.

For under you
A huge and certain stride
Throbbing in darkness
Through a boarded hull,
With rhythm
That made your small, contrary step
Falter and lurch against it,
Has loosed the feeling of finality
From man's aggressive tread:
And sometimes, vision of a crouching ocean
Swept round the sun
Is yours
In the watches of the night.

Only one who has felt the flood of infinite wonder
Against the tick of reason in a skull
Can know your loneliness,—
Wanderers of ocean over narrow boards,
Withheld from freedom and beholding it.

Susan Clay Sawitzky

SIERRAN AFTERMATH

(To the members of the International Brigade killed at Jarama.
February 1937.)

Love that flowered into death
Was theirs and in them 'ere
Questioning by their offering
Our unofficial infantry
Lies unsung, unhonored, and four hundred.

Always when it seemed there must be some assistance,
Always when it seemed even the bully must see, must admit,
Always when it seemed the point was proved
That might have stirred the deaf to act the dumb to answer
There came a splitting thudding from the sky .

Always on the Guadarrama love
That flowered into death sings
Riego, Riego, laughing on those slopes,
And on those startling peaks
Leaves something ineffaceable

Moving; as to me the names
Like water or like moonlight
Evade the memory and are silent.
As to me the eyes, the faces
Are beyond and in the morning small

Ewart Milne

FROM "THE LINCOLN LYRICS"

END OF A WAR

I

The morning trumpets hang like misplaced toys;
Lion-like, the mighty claws of conflict lope
Towards peaceful brakes; now do museums claim
The slashed accoutrements of civil war.

Those years reverberate like midnight gales,
Echoing down the split and checkered sky
To join the memory of the world; the little
Commerce of surviving life begins,

And Gettysburg and Shiloh close like scars
Since human will employs biology
As curious as any in the books—
Its web-like armor, its blood festivals

Ill and foolish will rehearse the dead
Particulars of guns, parades will show
Their weakness like a cancer year by year
Whose cause will seem extinct as Latin verse.

But on the marginal fields, inheritors
Will learn, through flashy cinema and subway
Reverie, the great communicating breath
That spoke a common purpose, and is gone.

The mind's antennae call men into life
As lovely as a castle undersea—
O strophed distance dangerous with dark
O lanterns of the loving on the waves.

II

Décor of joy: extravagance in speech,
On weekday men a cap and bells, joy's torch
Thrown seaward like the sun. And in the pulse
One flooding scherzo headlong to the heart.

Flower crowds come, whose look articulates
The paucity in words; and brands of light,
Lit on Olympia and borne through years
Now dark, now gay, now come to fiery pause.

O, lyrical as laughter in the noon,
Those insane cities fall to tears, dissolve
The hate kept volatile in fists, and rise
Transcendant, haloed, on the ringing plains.

In some source-book of sympathy, where was
It writ? Where has it gone? there comes like wind
A piercing tenderness, in crisis born,
Apparent to the most malicious eye.

After so much of death, the breath is free
To formulate the issues of remorse,
Or sing; touching sentimental things
The people put away dark memory.

Yet all is abandoned quicker than belief:
Their fists will close around distrust and fear,
Their laughter twist to venomous design,
Whole cities murmur in the tolling dark.

They will submit their lives, forgetting how
Disaster wakes, nor learn the husbandry
Of simple good; missing a god-like stance
By distance briefer than their gifts of faith.

THE MONUMENTS

We are the lavish ones with gifts of stone.
Unable to the fashioning of life,
We lift a portico to house that heart
Not meant for snapshots or the tourist's day.

Here form is real; white arches grant the eye
Tall evidence. However deep that voice
Re-echoes in the harmonies of crowds,
We dare not know its character or tongue.

And yet, at midnight, or indifferent day,
The unschooled loving, never noticed, shy,
May touch their fingers toward reality,
With prayer-like words conjoin their love with his,

Who is the author of America
Through all surviving destiny or dream;
Assassins viciously abroad have caught
The warnings of devotion in their eyes.

And where that figure wanders late and wide,
A woodsman or townee, traditional
With hope, may watch the great head slowly bend
Its marvelous assent from village squares.

Abe Lincoln comes in moments known by these;
Not pyramids nor carillons with bells
May say their special wisdom to the earth,
Who are its fabulous inheritors.

THE FUNERAL: TRANSCONTINENT, TRANSWILDERNESS

Turns westward now the body of a man:
The little depots harbor multitudes
Who, in the fading ceremonies, touch
Some cornice of eternity with hands.

Legends unravel in the crowded dusk:
This one remembers gestures and a hat,
Another, words, a healing touch, a rhyme
More marveled in the telling than the fact

Women, who wait for tragedy, have seen
The hearse-like shape across the morning square,
The faceless harriers, dark welcomes;
They are more wise and earthly than they know.

And men, unoccupied with tricks for gain,
Tumble like struck St. Paul to feel the rays
Of disbelieved and now escapeless truth:
Their homage is the lifting of a hat.

Voyage is punctual, the serpentine
Procession goes as though into a mist;
Springfield is waiting, and familiar graves
Swing on the lyric seasons of the globe.

Gone is the touchable bouquet of myth.
No enemy is there. Nor on the marble
Slab is any story true. The power
Of the past is greater than we dare to know.

John Malcolm Brinnin

RELIGION AND SENSIBILITY

WE MAY regard it as axiomatic that Dr. I. A. Richards is entirely correct when he says, "It is never what a poem *says* which matters, but what it *is*." This is not to affirm the vulgar platitude of American advertising, that it is not what you say but how you say it. On the contrary, our understanding of the word *form* will be of its purer Thomistic sense: as the principle of specification, as that which makes a thing what it *is*.¹ It is not, therefore, some external pattern into which an already existing thing is fitted. It is, rather, the very principle which gives a thing its actual existence. And as a more exact word for what is generally indicated by the word *content*, I suggest that we borrow another term from its context in Thomistic cosmology: the term *matter*. Aristotle and Saint Thomas used the term to denote the co-efficient of form in the ultimate constitution of all corporeal being. Matter is "pure potency"; it is indeterminate, undetermined; it has no actual existence until it receives form. Form, on the other hand, has no existence apart from matter. They are mutual causes: form preceding matter in the order of formal causality; matter preceding form in the order of material causality. The frequently used correlatives, *form* and *content*, are inadequate, because they do not convey this notion of mutual causality, and because the term *content* is ambiguous, sometimes meaning less the concern of the literary critic than the concern of the historian of philosophy. Similarly, the combination *form* and *substance* must be rejected, because

¹See Gredt, *Elementa Philosophiae Aristotelico-Thomisticae* (7ed., Fribourg: Herder & Co., 1937), 253; 258ff; 753.

these terms permit the inference that form is merely accidental, neither causing matter nor being caused by matter¹ It is not my purpose here to expound in any adequate manner the theory of hylomorphism but it is necessary to go this far afield into metaphysics in order to find the clearest expression of the idea. Matter in poetry, then, is all that modification of the sensibility, all the experience of thought and feeling which co-joins with the form of language in the making of poetry. The application is thoroughgoing. To separate (I do not say distinguish) the matter from the form is to destroy the existence of both Together they constitute the "essential whole" of the poem. But since we can speak of matter as pure potency, we can speak of a purely potential poetry, previous to the *poesis* in which it finally receives actual existence through the actuating principle we have called form. Sensibility, then, will mean for us the *prime matter* of poetry, the pre-poetical existence of poetry.

We assume, of course, the integrity and vitality of the poet's art. In a decadent art, there will not be this intimate union and mutual causality between matter and form Thus, Mr. Herbert Read makes a distinction between "organic form" and "abstract form" In his own words:

When a work of art has its own inherent laws, originating with its very invention and fusing in one vital unity both structure and content, then the resulting form may be described as *organic*

¹I am aware, of course, that the terms *matter* and *form* often have been used in literary criticism, in a sense quite different from that urged here.

Another possibility of misunderstanding suggests itself We are not concerned with an analysis of the poem in its physical constitution. In such an analysis, the "material cause" is language, and the "formal cause" is its arrangement or "disposition." But in the present essay we are considering an entirely different relation of causes, one perhaps more relevant to the problem of contemporary criticism: the relation between the experience to be expressed and the art by which it is expressed.

When an organic form is stabilized and repeated as a pattern, and the intention of the artist is no longer related to the inherent dynamism of an inventive art, but seeks to adapt content to predetermined structure, then the resulting form may be described as *abstract*.¹

Mr. Read illustrates his point by advertizing to the art of the ancient Scythian hordes and instancing its decay when an "original impulse" of rhythmic line in their animal-drawings was lost after two or three centuries, while the mere form remained to develop into stereotyped and over-complicated decoration.

Translating Mr. Read's terms, we see that organic form is really form as determining matter, and yet materially caused by matter. Abstract form is an attempt at a metaphysical absurdity, form without matter; and it fails as art because it fails of achieving *essential wholeness*. Art for art's sake never achieves art. That is, it never achieves itself. For it is, in the austere language of the Schools, "incomplete being."

Perhaps now it becomes clear why we have found it necessary to use terms sanctioned by a central intellectual discipline. Mr. Read surely does not mean that the superiority of one art to another lies essentially in the superiority of one kind of form to another kind of form. The difference between early Scythian art and decadent Scythian art lay in the relation between matter and form in each art. Even when we speak, as Mr. Read does, of one form as being inferior to another form, the deficiency of the inferior form consists in its lack of an "inherent dynamism"; that is to say, its lack of a true material causation. Ultimately, then, the superiority of organic form to abstract form is not a question of form, but a question of matter. Therefore it is a question of sensibility.

¹*Form in Modern Poetry*, 3.

We conclude that sensibility affects more than "content" in poetry: it is more than a core, or a hard centre; it is more than something *in* the poem. The sensibility determined *is* the poem. And sensibility, we agreed, is the poet's entire experience of thought and feeling. It is not enough to say that the poet's religion is part of that sensibility. Religion is not simply another experience; it colors and values and directs all experience. It is, in short, the experience of experience. Since it is that by which the poet views the entire universe and by which he interprets all that happens in the universe, religion is the very edge, the very point of the poet's sensibility.

Fortified by these syllogisms, let us notice a few sentences in one of Mr. Eliot's earlier essays on the problem of belief in poetry:

The great poet, in writing himself, writes his time. Thus Dante, hardly knowing it, became the voice of the thirteenth century; Shakespeare, hardly knowing it, became the representative of the end of the sixteenth century, of a turning point in history. But you can hardly say that Dante believed, or did not believe, the Thomist philosophy; you can hardly say that Shakespeare believed, or did not believe, the mixed and muddled skepticism of the Renaissance. If Shakespeare had written according to a better philosophy, he would have written worse poetry; it was his business to express the greatest emotional intensity of his time, based on whatever his time happened to think.¹

It is difficult to see how it directly follows that if Shakespeare had keener and deeper sensibility, he would have written worse poetry. What Mr. Eliot seems to be claiming for Shakespeare is a certain *insensibility*; that is, an unquestioning and lump acceptance of his time, without any kind of discernment. Whether this is true of Shakespeare or not, it surely is not the key to his greatness. Dante himself would say to Mr. Eliot:

¹*Selected Essays*, "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca," 117.

Ritorna a tua scienza,
che vuol, quanto la cosa è più perfetta,
più senta il bene, e così la doglienza.¹

A poet is not, as Mr. Eliot would have him, simply the expression of his time. More precisely, he is the *impression* of his time. Otherwise we should not have the poet feel for society, but really should have society feel for the poet. Indeed, he may be, in effect, "the antenna of society"; but his duty is to his poetry and not to society. He is fully in his time, but a certain duality is preserved—the duality which exists between a man and his conscience. The conscience which the poet brings to his age is the conscience of unchanging values, of a permanent way of appreciating experience. So Mr. Eliot misleads us when he regards Dante as "the voice of the thirteenth century." *The Divine Comedy* is not so much a record of Dante's time as it is a judgment of his time. Dante may have expressed in it the contemporary belief in Heaven; but he also put many of his friends in Hell.

Dr Richards, too, seems to neglect the personal identity of the poet in our age, and so he sees the probability that poetry may soon become impossible, because there is no poetry in the philosophy of an indifferent universe, a "neutralized" Nature. Undeniably, there is no poetry in such a philosophy. But Dr Richards' assumption is that this indifferent universe must be expressed by an indifferent art; in short, that the neutralization of Nature must be expressed by a similarly neutral poetry. On the contrary, the full expression of our age must come from a

¹*Inferno*, vi, 106. "Go back to your science, which has it that the more a thing is perfect, the more it feels pleasure and likewise pain."

poetry which views time in the searching and pitiless light of a truth above time. It is only thus that Aristotle's distinction between poetry and history can be preserved.¹

On the other hand, we shall not substitute metaphysics or—as the New Humanists often did—ethics for literary criticism. The literary critic is concerned only with literature *qua* literature. And although the value of the experience communicated in a poem may depend on other than literary conditions, no standards other than literary standards should be invoked in the evaluation of the poem as such. The enjoyment of the work is an aesthetic enjoyment, and the more valuable the experience communicated the deeper will be the enjoyment which is a re-living of that experience. The literary critic will measure the value of that experience according as it transmits itself as literature.

We may put the question as bluntly as Mr. Eliot has sometimes put it. Does the poet's belief matter to us in our enjoyment of the poem? The answer is no. It matters to the poet: not to us. What matters to us is the poem. Or we can answer by saying that belief does not matter in the poem; but it matters tremendously *before* the poem is written. We should hesitate, however, to answer as Mr. Martin Turnell does

¹*Poetics*, ix. "From what we have said it will be seen that the poet's function is not to describe the thing that has happened, but a kind of thing that might happen, i.e., what is possible as being probable or necessary. The distinction between historian and poet is not in the one writing prose and the other verse. You might put the work of Herodotus into verse, and it would still be a species of history. It consists really in this, that the one describes the thing that has been, and the other a kind of thing that might be. Hence poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature of universals, whereas those of history are singulars." [Baldwin's translation]

The critic begins his study as an examination of the poet's language and style, but it is a mistake to think, as people are sometimes disposed to think, that his work ends there. He has to go on and criticize the poet's outlook and his choice of subject. There is no greater fallacy than to assume that subject-matter is of no importance, for this is simply to admit that there *is* a difference between form and content.¹

Possibly the difficulty is with Mr. Turnell's language. But at any rate, the implication seems to be that the literary critic has two functions: one purely literary, and the other philosophical. To say that the critic must "go on and criticize the poet's outlook and his choice of subject" is at best to make a dangerous statement. The critic is surely not interested in the poet's outlook *as such*, but only in its literary strength. What seems to be responsible for the difficulty in Mr. Turnell's statement is his preoccupation with the "difference" between "form and content," a difference which he appears to regard as a separation rather than as a distinction. Here again, the philosophical terms *matter* and *form* might do a service. A conception of their mutual causality and of their inseparable union in the poem makes it clear that the literary critic may remain simply literary critic the whole time he considers the poem, although surely he will distinguish between matter and form, if he can. Practically speaking, he will be hard put to making even the distinction in such poets as the Symbolists, for whom symbolism is, in varying respects, both form and matter. Indeed, Mr. Turnell seems to agree to all this in a later page, in which he compares the criticism of Rivièrre with that of Massis.

The reason why this criticism is illuminating is that it is *literary* criticism; it shows that for Stendhal the absence of a coherent view

¹*Poetry and Crisis*, 17

of life involved artistic flaws in his work. It is instructive to compare the approach of Rivière with that of Massis in the passage given above. We notice at once that Rivière is concerned with the writer, and Massis with the *subject-matter* of the writer. Rivière shows how narrowness of vision leads Stendhal to present an incomplete picture of life, to exclude whole tracts of experience. Massis, on the contrary, is criticizing the modern novel because its picture of man differs from man as defined in a Catholic philosophy, forgetting, it seems, that modern man has indeed lost his bearing and that the contemporary novelist's business is not to show us the ideal, but man as he is.

The great value of these two passages is the way that they bring out the difference between the literary critic and the sociologist.¹

Assuredly, the literary critic will have much to say in his own right. No less than in Mr. Read's example of Scythian art, a poverty of matter makes itself felt in a decadence of form. Dr. Richards lays the present condition of poetry to the cosmic revolution brought about by science and resulting in the destruction of the "Magical View of the universe", and this predicament he likes to call "the neutralization of Nature."² But a more accurate phrase for the modern condition is the neutralization of Man. What has happened—and it began with the Renaissance, not with recent empirical science—is that the poet has suffered the loss of a unified sensibility; that is to say, he has no aesthetic system of nerves to make every experience the experience of the whole sensibility. Two eternities came together in the medieval man—Heaven and Hell—and therefore his sensibility knew a literally infinite depth. Every deliberate act was a choice between

¹*Poetry and Crisis*, 81. The citation serves our purpose, but as a matter of fact, Mr Turnell's criticism of Massis is basically unfair, precisely because in the passage which Mr. Turnell considers, M. Massis is concerned not as a literary critic at all, but admittedly as a sociologist. His *Defense of the West* investigates literature, among other phases of western culture, for symptoms of a deplorable infection of oriental thought.

²*Science and Poetry*, 57 ff.

these eternities; every experience could be related to the drama which was the tension between Heaven and Hell in his soul.

Dr Richards would reduce this sensibility to a belief in the geocentric theory, perhaps, or to an ignorance of Newtonian physics. But the point is that this sensibility lay less in one's view of the stars than it did in one's view of his own soul. Too much is said of the feeling of "stability" as the primary characteristic of the universe of Dante and Chaucer. Thus, for Mr. Turnell, the chief mark of Dante's sensibility seems to be that his is a "clearly defined universe"—"with a Heaven above and a Hell beneath",¹ and "the value of medieval literature lies in its power of communicating a feeling of stability and confidence"². But Dante's "clearly defined universe" was not the cause but only the effect of an inner unity in his sensibility. What he had, and what has become dead since that time, is a religious nerve. And experiencing all things through that nerve, he was able to set all experience in order, according to absolute values. Mr. Turnell confuses Dante with Dante's work. Dante experienced the world through a sense of unity; but it was his work as an artist to re-create that universe as an external unity. In Dante himself we find only the religious nerve; but he had to labor over *The Divine Comedy* to produce the "clearly defined universe" which Mr. Turnell remarks. I argue to distinguish the medieval sensibility from a function of that sensibility. If a clearly defined universe was already vivid to the people of Florence, then Dante had no valid function as a poet. I do not say, of course, that it was Dante's function to do the defining: that task had already been accomplished by Christian theology. But it was his function to

¹Poetry and Crisis, 14.

²Ibid., 77.

communicate an intense experience of that universe, to vivify it for his contemporaries. He began, not with the clearly defined universe, but with a universe and a sensibility unified by a coherent theology. Strictly speaking, the artist does not begin with Beauty—he begins with a thing and a sense of beauty, and he *expresses*—re-creates—the beauty in that thing.

The distinction must be urged. For the great tragedy of our literature is not that it has lost the medieval universe, but that it has lost the medieval soul. The "stability" which Dante had was not in his universe but in his soul; and it was precisely this inward stability which made him see that his universe was far from stable, but, on the contrary, was vibrant with an infinite tension. This tension, and not a "feeling of stability and confidence," made medieval literature. Every experience hung between the chorus of stars and the bottomless chasm. *The Divine Comedy* is no mere exposition of a settled eschatology. It is a drama. It is not so much a poem about Hell and Heaven, as it is a poem about a man in Hell and the same man in Heaven—a man who is capable of going either to Hell or to Heaven. He faints with pity for Paolo and Francesca; his eyes burn in the celestial radiance of Beatrice; he cries out from Hell against the corruption of his city. And in the torture of their damnation his compatriots beseech him,

Fa che di noi alla gente favelle¹

This tension is the essential drama in all medieval tragedy and even in all medieval comedy. Langland expresses it: he is the suffering conscience of Christian society. And if Langland voices

¹*Inferno*, xvi, 85 "See that you speak of us to men"

it for society, Villon voices it for the individual. For it is the Christian sense of sin that is deepest and most haunting in Villon. And since, in an integral art, the terms of comedy are the same as the terms of tragedy, this same tension provides the basic stuff in the comedy of Chaucer and Rabelais. For them the tension meant incongruity; the very formula *rational animal* was humorous to them, and they delighted in the foibles of these creatures, of whose incongruous dignity they both were profoundly conscious. Forget their serious consciousness of this dignity, and you have lost their humor.

The medieval poet, then, had absolute values. There was "only one sorrow, the sorrow of not being a saint." There was only one joy, the joy in the Redemption: the joy that sang itself in the liturgy and in the *Canticle of Brother Sun*, and sang itself in stone in the great Gothic things we see at Chartres and at Rouen. This joy and this sorrow were the experience of man in the tension of his need for salvation. But these absolute values only deepened his human values. And so it was the medieval sensibility which gave us the tender story of Dante and Beatrice, and the wild exuberance of the *Canterbury Tales*, and the gargoyles of Paris.

With the Renaissance began what I have called the Neutralization of Man. Spiritually disintegrated, the poet could no longer bring the *whole man* to his external experience. And because he was sick inside, his art turned to introspection. He became insensitive—that is, neutral—to the infinite *depth* of human experience. He could no longer place cosmic values on experience; and so the chief value of experience came to be simply that it *was* experience. Thus the Russian philosopher, Nicholas Berdyaev, tells us that literature has lost a dimension—the dimension of

depth. The post-Renaissance man moves on a two-dimensional plane.

The dimension which was lost to literature was its containing dimension. We ask of poetry that it communicate a valuable experience; but what is valuable? "An experience full of life," answers Dr. Richards.¹ But elsewhere in the same book he says that "experience is its own justification." What comes of such a theory is a formless expressionism; and indeed it has come. We have Gide, we have Proust: man is buried in his own experiences and he no longer even tries to refer them to any central meaning in himself. The novel is by definition a study of man, but it can be no more than a notebook when there is no hierarchy of interests in man himself. And poetry becomes the expression of "personality." Certainly Mr. Read would have it so.

It follows that character must be placed in opposition to personality, which is the general-common-denominator of our sentiments and emotions. That is, indeed, the opposition I wish to emphasize; and when I have said further that all poetry, in which I include all lyrical impulses whatever, is the product of personality, I have stated the main theme of my essay.²

One could wish for no clearer statement of the disintegration of the human character—and of the very notion of character—in art. "Express yourself," says the expressionist; and he proceeds to express everything except his *self*. Although this philosophy finally provided its own *reductio ad absurdum* in Dadaism, that strange and somehow macabre assault on sanity, expressionism remains and will remain with us until we shall be possessed of ourselves rather than obsessed by ourselves. The

¹*Science and Poetry*, 46.

²*Form in Modern Poetry*, 18.

fresh material of introspection may have produced some excellent poetry in the tightly drawn lines of the metaphysical school; but at best the condition of that art was an unhealthy condition, for poetry should proceed from unified thought and feeling, and these poets had to proceed in search of that unity. We finally realize the horrors of over-cerebration when we read the savagely scientific literary criticism of M. Paul Valéry, an insensitivity best caricatured in the intellectual monster of his own creation, M. Teste. On the other hand, those poets who despaired of an objectively true sensibility and simply looked into their hearts and wrote, left poetry to the most slovenly and messianic kind of individualism, scorning the crowd for whom the medieval poet sang, and neglecting the service of beauty as *splendor veri*. Art became then not an intellectual virtue, but an emotional debauch; and criticism became truly a sentimental "journey among masterpieces."

Sapientis est ordinare. Poetry may or may not be, at bottom, a criticism of life; but life is a good criticism of poetry. If poetry does not communicate what is permanently valuable in human life, then poetry is trivial and without meaning. But this awareness of what is permanently valuable can come only through a sensibility alive to absolute values. Poetry will be made whole when the poet is made whole.

Henry Rago

[The next issue of POETRY will contain a reply to Mr. Rago's article by David Daiches.]

R E V I E W S ,

THE THEME OF DISINTEGRATION

Death at Sea, by Frederic Prokosch. Harpers.

THREE novels, two collections of poems, springing with alternate annual regularity from the sensuous imagination of Frederic Prokosch: now the third volume of verse, *Death at Sea*. There is no mistaking the family resemblance. Here again is a repetition of the Prokoschian theme stated often (to mention the poetry only) in *The Assassins* and in *The Carnival*—the theme of bourgeois degeneration and decaying civilization: the perpetual "noise of falling cities." And here again are the same genuine brilliance, skillfully resolved patterns, beautifully tempered rhythms—music beyond that attained by most contemporary poets.

It will be recalled that in *The Carnival* Prokosch called upon history (Magellan) to give him "some vast belief." But a "belief" does not fall like Newton's apple when the accidental bough is shaken. Meanwhile the aspirant to discovery continues to sit beneath the tree, "loving the unattainable and forbidden," and sadly contemplating his own individual navel. It is very nice to be an exile from tragic reality, one of the beautiful lost wanderers of all time: Rome is burning, and there is always room for second fiddle in the orchestra.

The reader's ear is enchanted by the music of these verses. But when a poem is read we may well ask, as Prokosch says himself in *Sunburned Ulysses*, if it is "scarcely to be grasped as anything other than music." Or, if we study the content apart from the Lorelei-charm of the phrasing, what have we?

A splendid historical symbol, yes: Ulysses, the lost mariner, "hard and isolated, in love with change alone"; the individual, that is—the escapist in our time—as both Eliot and Jeffers (before Prokosch) have had a hand in creating him. But is it enough merely to project the symbol, to leave the meaning in terms of exact contemporary significance vague or unstated? Mr. Prokosch, of course, has that privilege. But is the plight of the individual the chief concern of thinking poets today? Growth and change for ultimate good are not to be promoted by uttering honeyed words, Mrs. Miniver fashion, over the smug, culture-licking individualism that is responsible as much as anything else for the present decay of so-called democracy, nurturing the rise of that very brand of collectivism it most abhors. To his credit, Prokosch sees this clearly. But to go on with his theme in *The Bird Watcher*. Here, in a compound of the Jeffers philosophy, with overtones from Spender, harvesters and peddlers are beheld "as an airman sees them,"—beautiful fragments of a vast obscure drama, with the "perpetual eagle hanging over the cliffs," vitality linked with doom, all joined in the picture and, Aesop-tale fashion, devouring each other. Only the poor poet is left (last stanza)

merely lonely, merely
feeling, not understanding, as death carries them
One by one away.

Not all of Prokosch's genuine horror of the current slaughter in the world, not all his tears for the ills suffered by humanity, not all the rhythmical beauty of his style will redeem him as a writer if he is willing to accept the doom of his time, if he lacks the will and the guts to see something besides the "stranglehold of history." I am not implying that he should leave his

gilded bough and join the intellectual proletariat shouting, "Comrades, arise." The task facing the poet with something valid to say about his time is far larger than that. I am asking Mr. Prokosch to come out from behind his vague definitions of terms and his strangely assorted metaphors, and tell us exactly what he means when he says ,

Since after all it is vitality only
That gives love meaning and to meaning power,
Forgive the dull, the defeated and the lonely
Inventing crises, slowly beginning to cower
As they sit in their deathly fashionable tower,
As they see the pony-footed ploughboy pass,
As they scent the awful, microscopic hour
Echoed in steel, reflected in the glass,
The tread, the threatening shadow in the jungle grass.

The shadow in the jungle grass: true, we know that. But how to be combated? By "vitality"—"power"? By reading Molière? By commenting on the beauty of athletes? By recalling "appalled and blinded" Kafka? Or by observing that (lord help us!)—

Marconi, Marx, Miss Garbo, Dr. Goebbels and Dr. Freud
Huddle like assassins over the staggering void.
Faces illuminated by the roving flames, they move
Their devastating glance,
Their empty lips and hands
Exquisitely to and fro in the mimicries of love.

O England, England, suffering death at sea. And O Mr. Prokosch, wanderer among once lovely imaginary lands, weeping for the unattainable lost ports. Turn the oars in the oarlocks if you can: it is later even than you think. Come home.

Ruth Lechlitner

~ TWO ISLANDS

New Zealand Poems, by Eileen Duggan. Macmillan.
The Gap of Brightness, by F. R. Higgins. Macmillan

Here are two poets with native lands for subject. Mr. Higgins plays a livelier part in his book, *The Gap of Brightness*, than Miss Duggan in hers, *New Zealand Poems*. He strides and brags and has visions, she quietly interprets. That is not to say that on the one hand we have Mr. Higgins and on the other New Zealand; more nearly the converse is true. Miss Duggan's idealization of her country keeps us from seeing it except, as it were, hand-colored; Mr. Higgins and his subject synchronize

Eileen Duggan's passion for her hero is apostrophic, the names she calls "Word made land"; "Sovereign soul"; "Mighty utterance," weighted with her humility. She depends often for emphasis on the sort of thing you find in hymns or anthems, the reiterated vocative or plea: "Ah in that day, my land, my land

"So shine, so shine, O hermit of the sea!" Out of the forty-odd poems, about a fourth chart, praise, address her country, and in lullabies, ballads, songs about sheep and the bush and the sea, you touch again and again this chord of reverence Spender's wry comment, that the only crimes in our intellectual society are Puritan traits of character, comes to mind. Of loyalty, steadfast faith, righteous anger, belief in sacrifice, she thinks, the crime, as always, lies in the manner: the clasping of hands when she talks of these things. "Man, ah man has kept his dream . Who dreamed you free and faithed/And a norm for all the earth . . . The land for the man and the man for the land. . . Arraign your heart, defend you to our dream." You keep finding in the lyrics, for the most part enjoyable, a sort of

false onomatapoeia, by which the rhythm, not the sound, is suggested: "But as a river flood that slowly, slowly swelling/Upward and upward by its depth surprises"; and, "He falls in the grasses and lies there and lies there." Dozens of these repetitions. You never have to dig for the idea. She takes you to the bay or headland or skyline where she found it and shows it, in strong, exact images, in its place. An appendix of Maori terms is of interest, but the reader is seldom perplexed by the vocabulary any more than by whin and curlew in an Irish poem. Which brings us along, as Clifton Fadiman says, to the next book.

Five years ago Yeats said that F. R. Higgins, who was his great friend, had more poetical genius than his verse (*Island Blood; Dark Breed; Arable Holdings*) had as yet shown. That may still be so. But *The Gap of Brightness* flickers with a light like genius's. The younger poet—Higgins is not far past forty—knows more about Irish folk music than anybody living. What a welcome comrade he must have been to Yeats, who looked on all poetry as song, was always contriving ways to get Irish poets' verses sung among the people, and possessed a completely unmusical ear. Most of Higgins' poems strike their own minor music as we read: the refrains, the uneven cadence, the doubled sound. Here the tune is all but sung

And softly, softly his words were moving through me—
Coaxing as a fife, crying like a fiddle—
That I heard my heart beat as the dew beat on the stubble.

I know of no other modern poet whose pattern gives the effect of utmost simplicity which is found to depend on an intricate scheme of rhyme substitutes. Almost every poem rhymes within the line, within the word; and since the stress falls with apparent haphazardness the source of the harmony is seldom obvious.

Notice the concealment here: "[He] ceases to spy on what the night has *hid*, And while each *timid* thing creeps into *bed*. . ." Higgins employs assonance very freely, the same vowel sound repeated for end-rhyme, or the syllable before the feminine ending, or vowels and consonants reversed, rearranged, to give a curiously unexpected chord, as: humours—music; bronze-plated—blaze on. This all makes for an amazingly sensitive web of sound. Here, from *Meath Men*, is a stanza that illustrates all the tricks:

Yet by the weirs that shiver with dark eels
Dusk breaks in leaps of light; and salmon-snarens
Are nightly sharing fish in salley creels
That merely seem a dream to Clare-men.

With the other important Irish poets of our time Higgins commands the quality of animation in verse, nearness to talk. These poets share, too, a contempt for the expected emphases in form or idea, and a conscious pitch of thought away from the dewy shadows of the Celtic twilight. With raciness and mockery that often resemble the jaunty air of James Stephens when he was young, Higgins writes of the blessings of drink, the craziness of love, the beauty of the common world, the old Gaelic bards, of crossgrained, changing and unalterable Eire.

Kathleen Campbell

GEORGE ABBE'S POEMS

Wait for These Things, by George Abbe. Henry Holt & Co.

Wait for These Things, a first collection of poems, is a tranquil, reflective book in the romantic tradition. The entries fall roughly into three groups: poems about nature, which mirror the beauty of New England, about people, and about the evils

of our times. Mr. Abbe is happiest when writing of the physical world. His treatment of nature is much like that of the Romantic poets, particularly Wordsworth: nature is for him teacher and discipline; he returns to the scenes of his childhood to recapture peace and joy, and he finds a power of restoration and solace in nature.

The poems about the New England scene are charming in their vivid detail and slow-moving, flexible music. Many of them, however, are damaged by serious faults of organization. For instance, the title poem is weakened by an incoherence of images. This lyric, as it is conceived, demands that the imagery be composed of sharp, realistic pictures drawn from nature. However, Mr. Abbe introduces a vague image like "New moons and mists that give us understanding," which means little, and later turns to an image that one might call metaphysical: "Wind roving down the keyboard of the stars." Thus the unity of the lyric is destroyed.

Other poems reveal further weaknesses in construction. *Birds in Autumn* is written from the point of view of one looking at an autumn landscape. Suddenly the observer is given super-human eyesight; as he watches gray, lonely birds circle over empty oaks, he can see sorrow in their eyes. The lyric is also faulty in that it purports to be about birds in a season of ruin, but by an elliptical transition it is unexpectedly dedicated to the spectator's sadness. *Early Bluebird* has as its theme the cruelty found in nature: a hawk kills a bluebird. But this strong tension is forgotten and the lyric is brought to a pretty resolution:

But some of the breath of my body was taken
And some of the blue of his body was left
Deep, deep in the blood where memories waken
When bluebirds have flown and the heart is bereft.

Imperfections like these appear throughout the book. In fairness, it should be said that such blemishes mar better poems than those under observation.

The studies in character, mostly of lonely, sensitive people whose dreams have not been realized, more nearly approach posters than portraits. These poems might conceivably be improved by dialogue. The men and women never explain themselves, and they almost never act. Mr. Abbe reveals them with limited insight and an untempered appreciation of their suffering. Of this group, *Storekeeper* is best. Although undistinguished in characterization, the poem is partially redeemed by the excellent detail of the background.

As the nature poems are quiet and personal and the sketches are of lonely people, one is not led to expect a consideration of the contemporary world. The inclusions in this group are bare of imagery and remind one more of essays than poems. In fact, one admires them more for their sympathetic attitude toward suffering than for their poetry. *Dream in This Quiet* says that the individual exempt from the horrors of war cannot remain indifferent: "We must turn back and share." These poems, despite their awareness of the strife of our times, are not pessimistic. *What Generation?* expresses the certainty that men will free themselves from the evils that enslave them; however, one cannot see the source of Mr. Abbe's hope unless it is a faith that men have in them more good than evil:

Think you we can ever see them turned
To the use of a handful of tyrants who learned
Every art of their rule from the wits of the underfed?

The best entries in the volume are *Vantage Point* and *Winter Twilight*, two admirable nature poems with philosophical implications. *Late Afternoon*, though slighter, is an attractive

description of a New England village in winter. These poems are well articulated in image and idea. One wishes that there were more poems of their quality in *Wait for These Things*, and that Mr. Abbe had disciplined his fine talent throughout the volume as he has in them.

• Robert Liddell Lowe

THE VALUE OF FAILURE

The Expense of Greatness, by R. P. Blackmur. New York City:
Arrow Editions

This is an irritating book, not because it is so bad, but because it is no better. Mr. Blackmur is a serious, when, indeed, he is not a solemn, critic, capable of nice discriminations, acute insights, illuminating subtleties. These gifts, however, are all but canceled by the deviousness of his style, the clumsiness of his vocabulary, the sophomoric pretentiousness of his tone. Not seldom he enunciates accepted truths with an air of fresh discovery, and repeats, without so much as a backward glance of recognition, observations made long since and more happily by such critics as Coleridge or Hopkins. An uncommon measure of patience and charity is demanded of the reader if he is to get past the obstructions Mr. Blackmur puts in his way in order to come at the good things. This is the more disconcerting because Mr. Blackmur reiterates in various ways, most of them involved and abstract to the point of obscurity, the statement made in his essay on Melville that "Words, and their intimate arrangements, must be the ultimate as well as the immediate source of every effect in the written and spoken art." His effects are poisoned at the source, and one can profit by them only if one has the antidote of a powerful longsufferance. He is so fear-

ful of the kind of writing that "cats and dogs can read," a phrase of Marianne Moore's which he does not tire of quoting, that he perpetrates the kind of writing that only cobras can digest and dons enjoy. As a result the reader, like little Alice, has to run breathlessly fast in order to stay in the same place, and he is frightened when he considers the extent of Mr. Blackmur's indebtedness to such overworked words as "distraught," "obsessive," "heuristic," "saltatory," "putative," and "actualizing." On at least one occasion Mr. Blackmur confesses that his treatment is comparatively "highfalutin," an admission which, had he made it to himself somewhat earlier, might have helped him to mend a defect which, to use a phrase of his own, is "basic only."

And yet, with all its faults, the book exhibits an appreciation of craftsmanship, an understanding of what the want of a body of received belief has meant to us as citizens and artists, a concern for the writer's place in society and his reciprocal relations with it, which give his work a serious claim upon our attention. His evaluations are generally just, although he underestimates Housman and overestimates Mr. Prokosch, and is witty, if in a rather heavyhanded fashion, only about Laura Riding. And when he escapes the labyrinthine involutions of his chosen style, he can produce good tropes and make notably sharp observations. Thus, in speaking of the "extraordinary sensual immediacy" of *Leda and the Swan*, he remarks that "the words meet and move like speaking lips," and in analyzing Santayana's novel, talks of "the final stiff strawflower of New England Puritanism." His essay on Hardy is one of the most rewarding pieces in the collection (which includes at least one omnibus review not worth reprinting either for the subject-matter or its treatment). His point is that Hardy substituted

for tradition his "personal and crochety obsessions," so that his sensibility was "violated by ideas," and was yet sufficiently "locked in life"—an instance of Mr. Blackmur's less fortunate images—to survive. The essay on Emily Dickinson is refreshing in its iconoclasm, while yet paying tribute where it is due. Here, too, as in the article on Yeats, he sees the effect of a failing tradition, vitiating in the first instance, stimulating, however dangerously, in the second. His review of *The Letters of Mrs. Henry Adams* abounds in delightful quotations which lead the reader to wonder why a man with so evident a feeling for apt description and salty prose is so lame in his practice.

The essay on Henry Adams gives its title to the book. Perhaps if this, rather than the magniloquent obfuscations on T. E. Lawrence, had been placed at the opening of the volume, one would have been more receptive to what follows, for, in spite of some flaws, it is a fine piece of elucidation. Adams's value for us, says Mr. Blackmur, is that he used "unifying conceptions as working principles," though completely aware that the values he thus achieved were only "provisionally ascertained." This was his education, and his greatness lay in his effortful searching, his responsiveness, leading ultimately to a knowledge that was an admission of ignorance, so that failure is seen as "the expense of greatness." On closer scrutiny this acceptable paradox seems to resolve itself merely into the insistence that a man's reach should exceed his grasp, or he is likely to find himself clutching what is scarcely worth exhibiting on his open palm. This platitude remains true of Mr. Blackmur's own performance. He has exceeded his grasp, but what he reached for was worth groping after, and what he found by the way worth looking at.

Babette Deutsch

POETRY ON RECORDS

The original plan for these reviews was to have them deal with the older recordings first, surveying the field before discussing the newest items as they came out. But the order in which the records are being received makes this impossible. All poetry records will eventually be examined here, but (less logic, more variety) the single reviews will for the present have to estimate both old and new discs together. This time records from three different categories will be examined: poets reading their own work, dramatic poetry, choral verse-speaking. The self-reading poets stimulate the widest interest because of the excitement of the personal element and because the poet, even when he is a poor reader, may provide a special key to his own work. (Indeed, most of these records are as important to own as the poets' books.) Dramatic poetry needs no preface; samples of it will only occasionally cross these reviews. Choral verse-speaking will be discussed in a later issue, when the recordings of the Eastbourne choirs will be evaluated. Meanwhile, let the present article begin with a pleasing example of American choral reading.

Americana in Verse, Vol. I, Ogden Nash-Newman Levy (Victor Mfg. Co., Camden, N. J.; three 10"). The sharp phrasing and cleverly turned metres of Ogden Nash's light verse seem custom-built for the vivacious and sardonic young voices of the Koralites. The two pieces by Newman Levy (*Thais* and *Rain*) seem lumpish and dated beside Nash, and even the verve of the Koralites can't quite save the poems, but Nash's *Mrs. Marmaduke Moore*, *Coffee With the Meal*, *Lucy Lake*, *The Strange Case of the Pleasing Taxi-driver* and *Pari-Mutuels* make this a desirable

album both for those who like light verse^{*} and those who admire skillful reading.

The Merchant of Venice, with Otis Skinner and Viola Allen in the Trial Scene (International Record Collectors' Club, Bridgeport, Conn; one 12"). This lively presentation of almost the entire Trial Scene finds the two elderly stars not acting their age at all. Prepared under the direction of Daniel Frohman (and paying a royalty to the Actors' Fund), the record provides some fine readings of famous passages, and although Miss Allen can add nothing to the Mercy Speech chestnut she makes a credible Portia. The total performance is swift and smooth, making this one of the most satisfying recordings of Shakespeare's poetry.

Vachel Lindsay (National Council of Teachers of English, Chicago; four 10"). This set is one of the most noteworthy yet made, and is of primary historical importance because the late Vachel Lindsay did so much for the renascence of spoken verse. His rhythms may seem a bit strident to those who were brought up on Eliot, and much of his reading may seem too violent; but it is bardic; it has a vigorous emotionalism that often sweeps the listener along. These records (remade from an old Columbia University series and lacking the benefit of newer devices) have a surface roar, but that doesn't drown out Lindsay. It is to be hoped that his recording of *John L. Sullivan* will be added to this set, which otherwise includes the best and most famous of Lindsay's readings: *The Congo*, *General William Booth Enters into Heaven*, and *The Chinese Nightingale*, that strange Middle Western vision (with all the conventional Cathay-symbols) of China, which is yet so curiously effective. There are also two amusingly read children's poems, *The Moon's the North Wind's Cooky* and *The Mysterious Cat*.

Archibald MacLeish, *Air Raid* (Columbia Recording Corp., Bridgeport, Conn.; four 12") and *America Was Promises* (Linguaphone Institute, N. Y. C; two 12"). MacLeish's prophetic verse play, *Air Raid*, was recorded from the first broadcast of it in October 1938, a few months after it was written. Done in the form of a "spot" broadcast from a tenement roof in a European town, *Air Raid* is one of the finest radio or verse plays of our time, despite an occasional mawkish touch and despite elements which may make some listeners believe it to be too horrible to be played now (The horror—necessary and artistic —was apparent from the first to those who, like the author, had closely followed the fate of Madrid and other Republican Spanish cities.) MacLeish can combine the most effective factors of poetry, drama, and radio. One of his most skillful touches in *Air Raid* is his Alfred Hitchcock-like use of the scale-singing woman's voice that becomes ("like a hoarse parody") the motif of an air-raid warning siren.

America Was Promises, one of MacLeish's most recent poems, reveals him again as sharply concerned with current affairs, this time projecting them against the background of the American as well as the recent European past. This album introduces the *I Am an American* series (featuring Mrs. Roosevelt, Einstein, Thomas Mann and others) which Linguaphone has made in collaboration with the Departments of Justice and Labor. The first half of the first MacLeish record has a program inaugurating the series and presenting the poet in a prose introduction to *America Was Promises*. MacLeish is an excellent reader, and recites his poem with a mastery of the rhythm and a fine sense of vocal phrasing.

Harry Thornton Moore

IT IS a pleasure to learn that audiences in the East will soon have an opportunity to see and hear Robinson Jeffers. Although no public announcement has been made at this writing, we have it on good authority that Mr. Jeffers will read and discuss his poetry at the Library of Congress on February 27th, inaugurating a series of readings and talks by distinguished poets which will be the first of its kind ever held there. We hear also that he has accepted several other engagements, at Harvard and elsewhere, and we hope that some of our Middle Western colleges and societies will be able to detain him on his way east or west.

Another excellent piece of news is that Marianne Moore has received the Shelley Memorial Award—a choice which promises extremely well for the future of this important prize. The award is approximately \$800 and is given annually from a trust fund established by the late Mary P. Sears of Boston. The judges this year were Alfred Kreymborg, Josephine Miles, and Philip Horton.

Stanford University is offering a prize of \$100 for verse drama (full-length or one-act) and another of \$50 for a short play running twenty or twenty-five minutes and suitable for radio. Paul Muni will be the judge, and the contest closes April 15th. For a complete set of rules write to the Proctor for Drama Awards, Stanford University, Calif.

The Writers School, 381 Fourth Avenue, New York City, announces a new workshop course by Joy Davidman, which will be devoted to the technique of writing and marketing poetry, with special attention to radio, broadsheets, and other new media. The class will meet Thursday evenings at 8:30, beginning January 23rd.

Four of *POETRY*'s prize-winning contributors gave a joint program at the New York Poetry Center, 92nd Street and Lexington Avenue, on January 2nd. The poets who talked and read from their work were David Wolff, Charles Wagner, H. Boner, and David Schubert. Amy Bonner acted as chairman. This was one of the regular series of Thursday evening programs held at the Poetry Center throughout the season. The series has included nearly all the well-known American and visiting British poets, and is undoubtedly the best thing of its kind which has been realized in this country.

Louis MacNeice sailed recently for England after teaching for several months at Cornell. Although Mr. MacNeice is an Irish citizen and therefore not subject to conscription, he was anxious to return to London.

The Tramp, the poetry quarterly of Anacortes, Wash., announces the award of its annual \$25 prize to Troy Garrison of Los Angeles. The prize is given for a poem which has appeared in the magazine during the year by a poet who has not yet published a book of verse.

From the Cummington School, Cummington, Mass., comes an attractive hand-printed pamphlet, *From This Hill*, containing ten poems and a

short story by members of the Cummington group. This anthology is an example of the interesting work in creative writing done at the school. The Cummington all-expense summer scholarship for the study of writing has annually attracted much interest among young poets.

Our California readers may be interested in the announcement of the annual Robert Browning Poetry Contest, sponsored by the University of Redlands, which offers a total of \$175 in prizes to California poets. A first prize of \$100 will be given for the best poem submitted by a resident of California who has not previously won the award. The second prize of \$50 is restricted to California high school students, and the third prize to students in junior colleges of that state. Contestants may submit only one unpublished poem, but there are no limitations of length, form, or theme. Entries should be submitted anonymously, with the name and address of the author (and, in the case of students, the school and grade) in a separate sealed envelope, and should be sent to Dr. Lawrence E. Nelson at the University of Redlands by March 1st. The winners will be announced in April.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

ROBERT PENN WARREN is the author of *Thirteen Poems* (Alcestis Press, 1936) and of a recent novel, *Night Rider*. He is one of the editors of *The Southern Review* and teaches at Louisiana State University. The poem *Question and Answer*, published in this issue, has been awarded the Caroline Sinkler Prize of the Poetry Society of South Carolina.

JOHN MALCOLM BRINNIN, a native of Nova Scotia, is a student at the University of Michigan, where he has received one of the major Hopwood awards for poetry. He was winner of the Jeanette Sewell Davis Prize in 1939.

E. A. RICHARDS, formerly of the Amherst and Columbia faculties, is now a consulting editor and director of writing courses in Chicago. He is the author of a book of poems, *Time Strikes*.

BABETTE DEUTSCH, of New York City, has contributed often to POETRY and is the author of several books of poems, including the recent *One Part Love*.

THEODORE ROETHKE teaches at the Pennsylvania State College. A book of his poems, *Open House*, will be published in the spring by Knopf.

ELIZABETH BOHM, of New York City, was introduced in our September 1938 issue. Her work has appeared also in *The North American Review*, *Commonweal*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, etc.

FLORENCE RIPLEY MASTIN, of New York City, has been a contributor since 1918. She is the author of two books of poems, *Green Leaves* and *Cables of Cobweb*.

HARRY ROSKOLENKO, of New York City, is the author of a book of poems, *Sequence on Violence*.

DOROTHY DOW, of New York City, is the author of several books of poems and plays.

We have the pleasure of welcoming five new contributors in this issue:

VIRGINIA LYNE TUNSTALL, a Southern writer now living in Cleveland, Ohio, is the author of a book of poems, *A White Sail Set*.

DENIS DEVLIN, an Irish poet, was born in Scotland in 1908 and is now Secretary of the Irish Legation in Washington. He is the author of two books of verse, *Poems* (in collaboration with Brian Coffey; Dublin, 1930) and *Intercessions* (London, 1937). He has contributed to *The Dublin Magazine*, *Ireland Today*, *Transition*, etc.

EDWIN G. BURROWS was born in Dallas, Texas, in 1917, and is now working for his Ph. D. at the University of Michigan, where he received the first major Hopwood award for poetry in 1940.

SUSAN CLAY SAWITZKY comes from Lexington, Ky., and now lives in the country near Stamford, Conn. A book of her early poems was published in 1923 by Ralph Fletcher Seymour.

EWART MILNE is a young Irish poet. A book of his poems has been published in Dublin, and he has contributed to *New Writing* and *Ireland Today*.

This month's prose contributors have all appeared previously.

HENRY RAGO, a Chicago writer, is now teaching at the University of Notre Dame. RUTH LECHLITNER, of Cold Spring, N. Y., is the author of a book of poems, *Tomorrow's Phoenix*. ROBERT LIDDELL LOWE is a member of the English faculty at Purdue. KATHLEEN CAMPBELL is the director of a creative writing group in Chicago. HARRY THORNTON MOORE, of Chicago, is the author of a biography of John Steinbeck.

BOOKS RECEIVED

ORIGINAL VERSE

The Ghost in the Underblows, by Alfred Young Fisher Ward Ritchie Press, Los Angeles.

Marks Upon a Stone, by Jane Dransfield James A. Decker, Prairie City, Ill.

The Yellow Witch, by Clyde Robertson. Loker Raley, New York City.

I Live Upon an Island, by Kathryn Jean MacFarlane, Tongg Pub Co, Honolulu.

Gore Lot, by Flora Cecile Allison Banner Press, Atlanta.

New World Poems, by Chen Wei Lu. Colony Press, Atascadero, Cal.

Appassionata, by Leona Hahn. Mathis Van Nort & Co., Dallas.

Natural World, by Eleanor Glenn Wallis. James A. Decker.

Idle Ideas of a Busy Man, by O. L. Crain Priv. ptd., Oklahoma City.

Sharp Scorpions, by Wrey Gardiner. Grey Walls Press, Billericay, England.

[Continued on next page]

- Green Branches*, by Samuel J. Looker. Grey Walls Press.
The Enchanted Hour, by Alice Phelps-Rider. Dorrance & Co.
Discovery, by Arthur S. Bourinot. Ryerson Press, Toronto.
Heart-shape in the Dust, by Robert E. Hayden. Falcon Press, Detroit.
Sound to the Silent, by Peter Darien. Priv. ptd., Berkeley Heights, N. J.
Songs of Season, by Peter Darien. Golden Hind Press, Madison, N. J.
The Shady Road, by Edith Courtenay Babbitt. Falmouth Pub. House, Portland, Me.
Time in the Turning, by Elisabeth Stanton Hardy. Falmouth Pub. House.
Seasons and Days, by Dan Blachly. Washington College Press, Takoma Park, Md.
The Dull Ass's Hoof, by Ronald Duncan. Fortune Press, London.
Dark Music, by Wilbur Chapman Goodson. Falmouth Publishing House, Portland, Me.
Welcome Dawn, by Grace Kiess Swiggett. Banner Press, Atlanta, Ga.
Senator Goose, by Stanton A. Coblenz. Wings Press, Mill Valley, California.
Warmth of Amber, by Robert L. Dark, Jr., Poetry Caravan Press, Lakeland, Fla.
Robots on Their Battlefields, by Walter Makowski. Poets Press, N.Y.C.
Come Stag, by Elizabeth Fowler Draper. Mathis, Van Nort & Co. Dallas, Tex.
I Look at Life, by Shella Cossin Livezey. Fortuny's.
The Recruit, by P. R. Kaikini. New Book Co., Bombay, India.
Basic Twelve, by Paul Rosenthal. Shakespeare Head Press, Oxford, England.
- ANTHOLOGIES, PROSE, AND A REPRINT:
- New Directions* 1940, edited by James Laughlin. New Directions, Norfolk, Conn.
New Michigan Verse, edited by Carl Edwin Burklund. Univ. of Michigan Press.
Poems by Nebraska Poets, edited by Frederick Blaine Humphrey. Priv. ptd., Lincoln.
Arrows of Gold, edited by Peter Wellington Clark. Xavier University Press, New Orleans.
Poets of Tomorrow, Second Selection: Cambridge Poetry 1940. Hogarth Press, London, England.
The Exiles' Anthology, ed. by Helen Neville and Harry Roskolenko. Exiles Press, New York City.
The Gleam: Yearbook of Original Verse by Members of the Rochester Poetry Society. Rochester, N. Y.
A Revolution in European Poetry, 1660-1900, by Emery Neff. Columbia University Press.
Twentieth Century Literature, by A. C. Ward. Longmans, Green & Co.
The Poetical Works of Robert Browning 1833-1868. Oxford Univ. Press.

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